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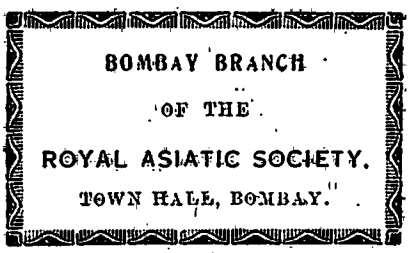

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THE LIFE

OF

HENRY THE FOURTH,

KING OF FRANCE AND NAVARRE.

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"THE HISTORY OF CHARLEMAGNE,"

"THE LIFE OF EDWARD THE BLACK PRINCE,"

&c. &c.

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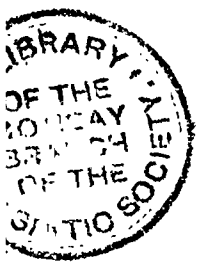

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THE

LIFE OF HENRY IV.

KING OF FRANCE AND NAVARRE.

BOOK X.

THE situation of Henry IV., on his accession to the throne, was probably the most perilous in which a new monarch was ever placed. The whole kingdom was convulsed, from end to end, by factions, the virulence of which against each other, had been nourished during many years of civil war, and not one element of discord and confusion seemed wanting to render the state of turbulence and anarchy which existed, of long duration. Not only the fierce and relentless spirit of religious fanaticism, not only the grasping cupidity of selfish and unprincipled nobles, not only the ambition of powerful and distinguished leaders, entered as ingredients into the strange mass of contending passions which the country presented, but the long indulgence of lawless courses, the habits of strife and bloodshed, the

want of universally recognized tribunals, the annihilation of external commerce, and the utter destitution of financial resources on all parts, seemed to place insurmountable obstacles in the way of any speedy restoration of order and prosperity.

The capital was in a state of rebellion against its legitimate sovereign; the large towns were in many instances held forcibly by the party opposed to the great majority of the inhabitants; the small towns and villages were generally disaffected to the royal cause, or wavering between opposite factions; and the rural districts were divided in their affections, sometimes presenting three or four different shades of opinion within the space of as many leagues. One province was nearly entirely Protestant, another almost altogether Catholic, another equally divided between the two religions. The parliament of Paris thundered against the parliament of Tours; the partizans of the late king looked with scarcely less jealousy upon their new sovereign than upon their enemies of the League; and many of those who were indifferent upon the subject of religion, made it their first enquiry how they could sell their services to the best advantage.

The preceding reigns had extinguished all respect for the law; the vices of the court had banished all notions of morality; and years of license had left barely the sense of common decency amongst the higher classes of the kingdom. Complete disorganization, in short, existed throughout the whole

fabric of society; and no common principle of action could be found as a permanent bond in uniting the members of any great party together. The League itself contained most discordant materials; but it was far more harmonious in its character than the great body of the Royalists; for community of religion at least afforded an apparent motive for combination where more substantial ties were wanting, while difference of faith in the camp of the King was at all times a pretext for dissensions, which at any moment might produce disorders, if not actual hostility.

Such was the state of affairs which Henry knew to exist at the moment, when he received the announcement, that he had so suddenly become King of France. The generous devotion, indeed, of a few loyal and high-minded men, tended greatly to encourage him in the commencement of his career; but apprehension and perplexity must have been the first emotions by which he was affected on entering the Hotel de Gondi and learning that Henry III. was dead. He found still greater alarm, however, reigning amongst the courtiers of the late King. Everything was confusion and disarray, and his presence did not tend to produce harmony and order.

The moment that his arrival was known, the Scotch guard came and threw themselves at his feet, exclaiming, "Oh! Sire, you are now our king and our master;" and the active and energetic

character of the monarch at once displayed itself in a remarkable manner. Without losing the time of action in thought, he applied himself to take advantage of the consternation of others, and secure the fidelity of the troops, and of the court, as far as possible, in order that the death of Henry III. might not altogether dissolve the bonds which held together the Royalist party, and overthrow the monarchy itself. He sent directly to the quarters of the Swiss and the French guard, to Marshal d'Aumont, to Biron, and to all in whom he could trust. He wrote during the same night to England, to Flanders, to Switzerland, Germany, and Venice, announcing his accession to the throne, stating his indisputable title, and requesting immediate aid to make it good against his enemies.*

* Sully. The number of letters which he either dictated or directed to be written during the course of that night and the succeeding day is very remarkable, many of them followed by a postscript in the hand of the King himself. Monsieur Berger de Xivrey, to whose careful and judicious labors I am indebted so largely, no less than to his kindness and liberal feeling in communicating the result of his own scrupulous researches to a foreigner, has preserved five of the epistles sent by Henry to different important bodies and to individuals, all differing in tone and words, though all announcing the same facts. These are followed by several others, notifying to foreign powers the assassination of Henry III. and his own accession; and amongst these are two to the Swiss Cantons, to whom Sully assures us the King wrote during the night of his predecessor's death. Nevertheless, as the letters of the 8th of August, presented to

But on entering the chamber of the deceased King, a strange and fearful scéne presented itself. The room was filled with the Catholic nobility of France; the minions were at the foot of the bed, with tapers in their hands, singing the service of the dead; and all the rest, "amidst howlings of despair, were drawing down their hats, or casting them on the ground, clenching their fists, plotting together, giving each other the hand, making vows and promises, of which nothing was heard but the ending words—'rather die a thousand deaths.'" One voice, however, gave the interpretation of all: a gentleman exclaiming aloud, at ten paces from the King, that he would rather give himself up to any enemies than suffer a Huguenot monarch.

While Henry retired from this confused and mutinous crowd to take measures for his own safety, the others held a hurried consultation, and the result was soon made known, by the Duke of Longueville, at the head of a large party of the nobility, seeking the King and desiring to confer with him. As the Duke was not inclined to speak himself, Marshal d'O was chosen to express the sentiments of the

us by M. de Xivrey may be considered in the light of credentials in favor of the French ambassador, it is not at all improbable that Sully's assertion may be perfectly correct, and that these epistles were preceded by others. It is to be remarked that all the correspondence of the King at this period, abounds in promises to preserve the Roman Catholic religion in the realm; and that he makes no allusion whatever to any want of cordial loyalty on the part of his nobility.

zealous Catholics; and, in a long oration, he pointed out to Henry the dangers of his situation, and exhorted him at once to embrace the Romish faith, as the only means of retaining the nobility of France in his service.

Henry, we are told, turned pale, either with anger or agitation, but he immediately replied in words which must be recorded here:—"Amongst the many wonders, gentlemen," he said, "with which God has pleased to visit us within the last twenty-four hours, that which is caused by your proceeding I should never have expected. Your tears—are they already dried? The memory of your loss, and of the entreaties of your King, not three hours ago, have they vanished, together with the respect which you owe to the words of the dying? If you quit the path of vengeance for the act of parricide which has just been committed, how will you hold that which it is necessary to follow for the preservation of your lives and stations? Which amongst you would wish to perfect the joy of the Parisians, and destroy an army of thirty thousand men by bringing into it confusion? It is impossible that all here can have agreed in all the points of what I have just heard—to take me by the throat at the first step of my accession; at so dangerous a moment to think to drag me to that, to which men have been unable to force so many humble persons because they know how to die! And from whom can you expect

such a change of faith, except from a man who has none at all? Would it be more agreeable to you to have a king who is without a God? Would you trust in the faith of an Atheist? and in the day of battle, would you follow with confidence the will and guidance of the perjured apostate? Yes, as you say, the King of Navarre has suffered great disasters without being shaken. Can he cast off spirit and heart on the steps of the throne? However, that you may neither call my firmness obstinacy, nor my prudence cowardice, I reply to you, that I appeal from the judgment of this company to yourselves, when you have had time to think, and when there are more peers of France and officers of the crown amongst you than I see here present. Those who cannot wait for riper deliberation, which the afflictions of France and our fears now banish, and who yield to the vain and brief success of the enemies of the state, have my full leave to seek their wages under insolent masters. I shall yet have amongst the Catholics all who love France and their honor." *

As he was concluding this characteristic address, the brave Givri, who had carried terror into the hearts of the Parisians, by a cannonade after the

* Another speech, very much to the same purpose, is assigned to Henry by the Memoirs of the League, and other good authorities, but the date of that address is the 8th of August. I should have concluded, perhaps, that the two speeches were in fact but one, and that the memory of Aubigné had failed him

defeat of Aumale at Senlis, entered the room, and throwing himself at the King's feet, embraced his knees, exclaiming, "I have just seen the flower of your brave nobility, Sire, who reserve, till they have taken vengeance, their tears for their dead King, and wait with impatience the commands of their living monarch. You are the king of the brave, Sir, and none but cowards will abandon you."

Givri's entrance, and the news by which it was immediately followed, that the Swiss were marching in military array to tender their oaths of fidelity to the new King, interrupted the painful conference in which Henry was engaged. This important movement on the part of the auxiliaries was brought about by the negociations of M. de Sancy, who, on the death of Henry III., had hastened to ensure the services of the troops he had led from Switzerland, to the aid of the royal cause.* But, nevertheless, the difficulties of the King's position increased every hour, for although Marshal d'Aumont, Givri, Humieres, and others, devoted them-

when he asserted that the above words were spoken by Henry to his nobles on the day after his predecessor's death; but I find in the Lettres Missives, an epistle to Monsieur de Poyanne, dated the 2nd August, pointedly referring to an address of this kind already pronounced by the King. It may be remarked also, that Aubigné, and de Sancy agree very closely in their account of these transactions, especially in regard to the views, if not to the conduct of Marshal Biron.

* Mem. De Nevers. Tom. 2, p. 590.

selves to his cause without any conditions whatever, and the support of the Protestants was not to be doubted; yet the Catholic party in the camp soon divided itself into three sections, one of which acknowledged him forthwith as their king and their leader, while another agreed to serve him on the condition that he should cause himself to be instructed in the Roman Catholic religion, but in the meantime, showed him very lukewarm attachment, and the third abandoned him at once, and went over to the League. Epernon, vain, haughty, and unbending, chose his course alone, and partly, it is supposed, on account of a dispute regarding precedence between himself and the marshals, partly from disappointed ambition, retired from the court and the army, promising Henry never to take arms against him, but refusing absolutely to serve a Huguenot king. Marshal Biron, also, if we are to believe M. de Sancy, adopted a still less generous line of conduct, and demanded, as the price of his adhesion, the cession of the county of Perigord.* This, we have every ground to believe, was promised to him in general terms; but he afterwards yielded to the reasons of the King for not dismembering the kingdom of

* Perefix declares that the King did not absolutely promise this boon, but the words of Sancy are distinct. In his Discours D'Etat, he says, after speaking of the demand made by Biron, "I went to tell the King of it, who ordered me to assure it to him."

France. His services, however, were undeniably very important, though he himself estimated them above their value, and though his share in retaining the troops attached to the monarch was not so great, perhaps, as that of M. de Sancy. The nobles of the Romish communion who remained, drew up a series of resolutions, upon the King's acquiescence in which, they agreed to assist, and to recognize him as their sovereign. The first of these implied that he would cause himself to be instructed, within six months, in the Catholic religion, taking for granted that instruction would produce conversion; the second, that he would maintain that religion in the kingdom without change, and would emancipate the Catholics from all restraint in the exercise of their religious liberty throughout the territories which he possessed as King of Navarre; the third, that in those towns and provinces, which in future should submit to his authority, all officers should be chosen from his Catholic subjects; and in conclusion, that he would permit his nobles to send an ambassador to the Pope to assign their reasons for the course they pursued.*

To these terms Henry reluctantly assented, having rejected another condition which the Catholic party sought to force upon him, and by which the exercise of every religion but their own would have been forbidden. He saw, nevertheless, that the support he received from the princes of the

* Davila, Perefix, Mem. de la Ligue.

blood royal, from the Duke of Longueville, and from several others, would be feeble and inefficient, so long as they conducted their operations under his immediate command; and he consequently resolved to detach them, at the head of various bodies of troops, into the different provinces, where their own authority and influence, being menaced by the League, afforded them a strong motive for acting vigorously on behalf of the party they had chosen.

Within one day after the death of Henry III., it had become apparent to his successor that the siege of Paris must be abandoned, in consequence, not only of the diminution of the royalist forces, and the dissensions which existed in the Court, but also of the enthusiasm and vigor immediately generated amongst the Leaguers of Paris by the success of the criminal enterprise which had effected their deliverance from the great peril that menaced them. The news that the King had been stabbed soon reached the capital, but hopes of his recovery were rumored at the same time; and, knowing that Henry of Navarre was at the head of his forces, the Leaguers did not venture to give way to the satisfaction they felt, lest their temporary joy should be speedily changed into disappointment. An event, however, occurred, which revealed to the Parisians the fact of the King's death sooner than it might otherwise have reached them. A combat at outrance had been fixed

for the morning of the 2nd August, between John de Lisle Marivaux, on the part of the Royalists, and Claude de Marroles, on the side of the League, and at the hour appointed, which was early in the day, the two combatants met, behind the garden of the Chartreux, when, with all the forms of ancient chivalry, the duel took place. Marivaux was foolish enough not to fasten the vizor of his helmet, and the point of Marroles' lance striking him in the head, hurled him to the ground, and remained broken off in the wound. He died shortly after, exclaiming, "I do not regret my fate, now that my king is no more." These words gave the opposite party the first intimation of the decease of Henry III.; and the most indecent rejoicings at once spread through the capital. The mourning in which many persons had dressed themselves, after the death of the Duke of Guise, was instantly cast off, and green scarfs were assumed as a mark of satisfaction. The Duchess of Nemours and the Duchess of Montpensier drove through the streets calling to the people, "Good news, good news; the tyrant is dead." Tables were laid at the corners of the streets, the houses were decorated as if for some great festival, and almost immediately afterwards, the old Cardinal de Bourbon was proclaimed King of France under the title of Charles X.* Immense efforts were made to swell the forces of Mayenne; and as soon as it was discovered that

* Journal de Henry IV. Chron. Noven.

Henry was in retreat from before Paris, the Duke hastened his preparations for the purpose of following him, with the vain boast that he would soon bring him a prisoner to Paris.

In the meanwhile, however, the King showed no precipitate haste, but having taken his measures upon the best consideration, pursued his course rather as a conqueror, than as a fugitive. He informed those who urged him to an immediate attack of the city, that, as many of his nobility had already left him, and others were very doubtful in their faith, it would be necessary to take some steps for disencumbering the army of all who hesitated in their allegiance, before any important enterprise was undertaken. For that purpose he proposed to lead his forces across two rivers, which would give those who were suspected, an opportunity of withdrawing from his ranks; after which he could more fully depend upon those who remained.* He accordingly crossed the river Seine at Poissy, and thence proceeded to Pontoise, while Sully and D'Aumont made themselves masters of Meulan, a town of much importance to the king, in his position at the time. He then carried the body of Henry III. to Compiegne,† taking by the way the

* Discours D'Etat de Sancy.

† The line of Henry's march was rather curious, and we are not aware of the circumstances which induced him to deviate so completely as he did from a direct course. By the kindness of Monsieur de Xivrey, I am enabled to give an account of his halting places on several different days after his march from St.

towns of Gisors and Clermont,* and finding that the Duke of Montpensier was rallying, with greater success than he had expected, the Royalists of Normandy, he resolved to march in that direction, rather than fall back at once upon Touraine. Previous to quitting the neighborhood of Paris, however, he attempted to open a negociation with Mayenne, by means of Villeroy, who had gone over to the party of the League; but no advantage attended the effort, and he found that on his own sword alone he must depend for the subjugation of his enemies. He now put in execution the plan which he had previously formed of separating his army into three divisions; and the Duke of Longueville was sent at the head of a considerable force into Picardy,

Cloud. Thus it would appear that on the 8th of August, 1589, he was at Poissy, on the 10th at Pontoise, on the 11th he was at Marines, on the 16th he was at Clermont en Beauvoisis, though it must be remarked that a letter exists to the citizens of Metz, dated from St. Cloud on the 15th, but little doubt is entertained that the word St. Cloud appears there by an error of transcription. On the 17th the monarch was at Neuilly Saint Front, in the department of the Aisne, where he remained during the 18th, and then marched, apparently suddenly, to Fresne or Ecquevilly (in another letter, the name of this place is written Fresnoy, and a third letter, of the same day, is still dated from Clermont en Beauvoisis.) From that date to the 23rd we have no farther letters, but on the latter day we find the King at Pont St. Pierre, in Normandy, where he remained a part, if not the whole of the 24th, and thence marched to Dieppe, which he had reached by the 26th, as is shewn by a letter in Rymer's Fœdera.

* Davila. Sully.

while another body marched into Champagne under the command of Marshal D'Aumont.* Measures were concerted for insuring the mutual co-operation of these corps with each other, and with the King's division; and as he still intended to proceed to Tours,† after having gained any advantages that he could in Normandy, the two generals were ordered to keep in readiness to effect a concentration of all the royal forces at that city, with the utmost speed when it should be found necessary. The army Henry retained under his own command consisted of 1200 veteran horse, 3000 French foot, and two regiments of Swiss, with which force no great undertaking could be accomplished.‡ But in his progress down the Seine he received a considerable accession of strength. Montpensier had gathered together a large body of troops in the neighborhood of Andelis, and a gentleman, known by the name of the Captain Rollet, or Roulet, a man of great courage and military skill, put the King in possession of the Pont de l'Arche, which, with its bridge over the river, was considered as the key of the Lower Seine. The monarch then took up a position at Darnetal, menacing the city of Rouen; but on the following morning he set out at the head of a body of 400

* Lettres Missives, Tom. iii. page 26. Letter to Captain Ponsort.

† This step was strongly advised by Elizabeth Queen of England. See Letter to Monsieur de Buzenval.

‡ Cayet. Mem. de la Ligue, Tom. iv.

horse for Dieppe, in order to communicate with La Chaste, the governor of that port, of whose fidelity to the royal cause he had already received some vague assurance. Not only did La Chaste now testify the greatest attachment to his person, but the inhabitants of the town also received him with heartfelt joy; and Vireme, governor of Caen, intimated his firm adherence to his duty, as a subject and a soldier.* Henry spent three days in examining the port, the fortifications, and the environs of Dieppe; in concerting his plans with La Chaste, and in despatching letters by the hands of Philip du Fresne,† to the Queen of England, to whose court that gentleman had been sent not long before by Henry III.,‡ upon a similar errand. He was now charged by Henry Quatre to urge the immediate embarkation for Dieppe, of any part of the stores and reinforcements promised by Elizabeth, which might be ready; and there can be no doubt that the French monarch at this time formed his plan, of retreating from Rouen to the position he afterwards assumed, and holding the armies of the League at bay till the English succor arrived. As his object was, however, to draw Mayenne away from Paris, in order to divert him from any attempt upon the towns which were held by the Royalists in

* Mem. de la Ligue. Lettres Missives.

† It appears from the Lettres Missives, that other envoys were sent to the Court of England about the same time.

‡ Davila.

the vicinity of the capital, till he was himself in a state to change the defensive into an offensive campaign, Henry returned to Darnetal, after detaching a small body of cavalry,* reinforced by some infantry from Dieppe, in order to reduce the town of Neufchatel. That place was surrendered, after a sharp skirmish with a party of Leaguers in the neighborhood, and the satisfaction of the people of Dieppe was very great, on finding themselves so speedily delivered from the enterprises of the adverse garrison, by which they had been much incommoded. As soon as this was accomplished, the King commenced an attack upon the suburbs of Rouen, affecting a fixed determination of besieging that city, although his forces, which did not number 7000 men, rendered the attempt quite hopeless, and the most experienced commanders in his army tried to dissuade him. It is generally admitted, that this demonstration was merely a stratagem to draw the troops of the League from Etampes, Pontoise, and Meulan;† and the fears of the citizens of Rouen

* Duchesne, Recit. veritable, &c,

† I cannot find the slightest trace in any of Henry's letters of a serious design to besiege Rouen at this period. He continually refers to his intended journey to the Loire, and to his purpose of proceeding thence to the attack of Paris. In a letter to M. de Vivans, dated the 23rd of September, he says: "That he had been detained in Normandy, first, by the opportunity of recovering several small places held by the enemy, and then by force," alluding to the position in which he was placed at Arques by the advance of the Duke of Mayenne.

greatly aided the King's design; for, although the Duke of Aumale and M. de Brissac threw themselves into the place with all the forces they could muster, the inhabitants, when they saw their mills burnt and their supplies interrupted, did not fail to send messenger after messenger to Mayenne, beseeching him to hasten to their deliverance in person.

When Henry heard that the Parisian army, nearly three times as strong as his own, was marching towards him, he seemed to pay more attention to the remonstrances of his officers; and at length as the advanced guard of Mayenne approached Vernon, he began his retreat, leaving Darnetal on the 2nd September, and retiring slowly, and in good order, upon Dieppe. He took the town of Eu by the way; but at that place intelligence of the real numbers of Mayenne's force reached him, and he found that the League had been strengthened on the march by the junction of a considerable body of German cavalry, by a reinforcement sent by the Prince of Parma from the Low Countries, and by the arrival of the Marquis de Pont with 3,000 French horse and foot. Everything showed him, too, that his enemy, not content with delivering Rouen, was advancing to attack him, resolved to risk a general battle; and he accordingly hastened his movements, to gain the advantage of position, as some compensation for the scantiness of his numbers. At the same time he sent off messengers to Longueville, and D'Aumont, commanding them

to join him without loss of time; and turning upon Dieppe, he marched at once to the spot on which he had previously determined to fight should circumstances render it necessary.

The town of Dieppe is situated at the extremity of two ranges of hills, with the small river Bethune flowing between them. The valley on either side of the river is still marshy, and was in those days a complete morass, caused by the regorging of the waters of the Bethune, from the action of the sea in high tides. The approach to the town was then by two roads only, one raised upon a tortuous causeway across the morass, which terminated at the gates of the town itself; the other descending from the height on the left, straight to the suburb beyond the port, which is called the Pollet. Several small rivers, the Arques, the Eaulne, and the various branches of the Bethune, interrupted the course of the causeway, which was carried over numerous bridges, and rendered the valley dangerous and difficult for an advancing army. The town, though not strongly fortified, was not without defences, and the citadel on the western side commanded the place on one hand, and the open country on the other. The heights to the west of the Bethune approach very near the city (which is not the case with the eastern range), and they extend, increasing in elevation for several miles, till they are crowned by the castle of Arques, with the small village of that name

at the foot of the declivity. Above is a wide extent of table land, and here Henry chose his position, facing the valley, and extending from the castle of Arques on his right towards the town of Dieppe on his left. La Chaste was left in command of Dieppe, and his garrison augmented by several companies of infantry. The castle of Arques received some pieces of artillery, and Henry, with his whole army, labored night and day, after his arrival, to strengthen his position by intrenchments, with lines of communication between them, and redoubts and ravelins, at sixty paces distance.* He afterwards caused the village of Arques to be defended by similar intrenchments, and placed one of the Swiss regiments therein, with two pieces of artillery, taking possession at the same time of an hospital, which he left in the hands of some of the French guard, to support a small party thrown forward to the very bank of the river, nearly opposite to the village of Martinglise, on the other side of the Bethune, which he did not doubt the enemy would occupy. His infantry were principally stationed at Arques, and in the intrenched camp above; while his cavalry were posted on his left towards Dieppe, sheltered from

* The personal labors of the King were at this time immense. He arrived at Dieppe on the 8th September, and on the 9th, in a letter to Madame de Grammont, he says, "It is a marvel how I live with the labor I undergo. God have pity upon me and show me mercy."

the enemy's fire by some vallies, and the thick wood which at that time covered the slope of the hill towards the east.

By the movements of Mayenne, on his approach, the King judged that the suburb of the Pollet might be one of the first points attacked; and as upon it greatly depended the safety of his position, he hastened to strengthen it to the utmost of his power, intrenching a mill which commanded the road, and throwing up some works to defend the different approaches. The inhabitants of the Pollet, as well as those of Arques, were zealous in his cause, and men women and children, labored incessantly, till the defences were completed. He then stationed Chatillon and Guitry in the suburb, with a body of French infantry.

On the 13th of September the army of Mayenne began to appear, crowning the opposite heights, in numbers variously stated, from thirty, to five and thirty, thousand men.* The forces of the King, according to several statements of good authority, did not amount to more than one fifth of the enemy; but he had with him some of the best and most resolute troops in France, and some of the most

* It is probable that the army of Mayenne did not amount to more than 30,000, in which statement both Sully and Davila agree. Henry himself says, in one letter, "Ils sont forts, au double de moi," when they were pursuing him from Rouen; but they were reinforced by the way, and in another letter, dated 26th September, he reckons them "dix contre un."

sagacious and gallant commanders,—men who had been formed in the civil wars, and acquired experience in many a long campaign and hard fought field. Amongst the noblemen present were Marshal Biron, Charles de Montmorency, Chatillon, Montpensier, Des Rieux, Guitry, Du Hallot, La Force, and the Grand Prior, natural son of Charles IX., who greatly distinguished himself in the events that followed.

Several days passed in light skirmishes, the cavalry of the King attacking the quarters of the enemy, and showing none of that apprehension which the Leaguers expected to find in the little corps which they kept shut in between themselves and the sea; but on the 16th, the Duke's intention of attacking the Pollet became manifest, and the infantry of the League began to descend towards that suburb, supported by a large body of heavy cavalry; while the light horse upon his left, took post in the village of Martinglise, to give occupation to the Royal forces at Arques. The Pollet, however, as it commanded the harbour in which Henry soon expected the promised reinforcements from England, was an object of the greatest importance to both parties, and leaving Marshal Biron in Arques, Henry hastened to the suburb with a body of horse and foot, and maintained it, during the whole day, against a sharp attack on the part of Mayenne. The General of the League made not the slightest progress in that quar-

ter, and retired defeated towards night. At the same time a skirmish had taken place between Martinglise and Arques, in which likewise the Leaguers were repulsed, with considerable loss. The three following days passed in sharp conflicts without bringing on a general battle, while preparations were made on the part of Mayenne for one vigorous assault upon the King's intrenchments at Arques.

I must pause here for one moment, to relate an anecdote respecting Henry's demeanor at this time, which cannot be passed over in the history of his life. A party of his light horse having been sent out to gain intelligence, encountered a small body of the enemy, and captured the Count de Bélin, whom they brought prisoner to the King's head quarters. Henry advanced on foot to meet him, and embraced him with his usual courteous good-humor; but seeing that the Count gazed round him on every side with astonishment and surprise, looking for an army, and beholding nothing but a few small parties of soldiers scattered here and there, the King exclaimed, with a gay and confident air, "You do not perceive all that I have with me, M. de Bélin, for you do not reckon God and the right on my side."

"Accustomed as I was," says Sully, "to see this Prince, I could not help wondering at his serene and tranquil countenance, on which, in circumstances so desperate, that no time was given for reflection, appeared at once an air of coolness and

of ardor, which seemed to the soldiers to be something more than human, and inspired them in their turn, with all the intrepidity of their chief."

Perceiving on the 20th, that the design of Mayenne was to take Dieppe, or to force him to an immediate battle, Henry determined to strengthen his post still further by throwing up another intrenchment in the valley, at a considerable distance in front of his real position, without any intention of defending it obstinately,* but merely to break the strength of the first attack. He labored hard then to complete it, carrying the work from the corner of a little wood on the slope of the hill, near which was a chapel, down into the meadows beyond the hospital. In this he placed a body of lanzknects, who had below them a hollow way, garnished with two thick hedges, while above the hospital were ranged three companies of light horse, commanded by the Grand Prior. These were supported again by three companies of men at arms, and at a little distance from them was stationed a body of horse, under the Princes of Condé, and Conti, and at the head of the trench appeared Marshal Biron, with a considerable number of the Royalist nobility. The intrenchment was not completed till night; and Henry himself, apprehensive of surprise, refused to retire to rest at all. Early in the morning he caused his breakfast to be brought to him in the trench, and called some of

* This work is called in the account of the battle given in the *Memoires de la Ligue*, "une tranchée perdue."

his principal officers to partake of it with him. He had scarcely commenced, however, when the intelligence was brought, that the enemy were advancing in order of battle, and immediately the King mounted his horse and prepared to receive them. It was a misty morning, so that the troops of Mayenne could scarcely be perceived as they approached with a firm face towards the heights of Arques. The first attack was made on the side of the hospital, where the German lanzknects, which formed the advanced guard of the League, supported by two French regiments, were encountered by their countrymen in the first intrenchment, which had just been constructed.* The lanzknects of the League, fatigued with their march, and alarmed at the sight of the defences thrown up against them, determined, it would appear, to have recourse to a treacherous stratagem, and putting their hats on the points of their pikes, gave the Royalist commanders to understand that they were

* In the various accounts of the battle of Arques, as in those of most other battles, there are great discrepancies; and I have been forced to select those parts from the different narratives which seem most probable, or are harmonious with those of other well-informed persons, without depending entirely upon any one statement for the whole facts. I may mention here, however, that the Memoirs of the League say, the battle was commenced by charges of cavalry on the part of Mayenne. It is not at all improbable, that according to the system of warfare in that day, the advance of the infantry was covered and supported by these charges of cavalry.

coming to join the party of the King. Presenting an appearance of great disarray, and crowded together in consequence of passing the wood, their assurances were believed, especially as a report had reached the Royal army that Mayenne's foreign troops were in a state of mutiny for want of pay. The Germans in the trenches, accordingly, instead of resisting their countrymen of the opposite army, aided them to pass, and Marshal Biron himself came down towards them, at first with the intention of charging them, but afterwards, when he learned what had taken place, to receive them as friends. They were thus permitted to advance close to the person of the King, and some of their leaders are even said to have kissed his hand in sign of submission.

In the meanwhile several charges of cavalry had taken place, in the course of which, after gallant efforts to maintain the field, the Grand Prior, and the body he commanded, had been forced back upon the chapel near the wood, though not without severe loss upon the part of the enemy. During the combat, the Grand Prior killed the Count de Sagonne with his own hand, and Henry himself hastened to rally his retreating cavalry, but was soon so far entangled amongst the fugitives, that for some time he was in great danger, till the infantry advanced to the support of the horse, with Chatillon at their head. At this time, the Germans who had pretended to come over, choosing the moment when the Royalist horse were in disorder, resumed

the attack upon the trenches, charged the Swiss, and began firing upon the body of nobility which surrounded the King. Several of their balls are said to have struck his armour; and the trench was gained, notwithstanding all the efforts of Galati, the commandant of the Royalist Swiss, and of Marshal Biron, whose horse was killed under him. Chatillon, however, pushed forward, charging two regiments of the League with such fury that they were driven back in confusion. The Royalist Swiss rallied behind his corps, and Henry, having disentangled himself from the crowd, came to their aid with his nobility. A fierce attack was now made upon the lanzknects in the trench, and after a resistance of a quarter of an hour they gave way and fled in disorder. A number of charges succeeded in the fog, Henry himself acting the part both of general and soldier; and, at length, the Duke of Montpensier coming up to his assistance, the Duke of Aumale, who led a large body of the cavalry of the League, was defeated, and driven back for a considerable distance at the point of the lance. Towards eleven o'clock the mist began to clear away, exposing the whole force of Mayenne, still pouring on into the narrow and difficult field which was already crowded with combatants; but this accident, which at first the Royalists looked upon as a disaster that must ensure their speedy destruction, proved, on the contrary, their salvation. The cannon of the castle of Arques, which had been

hitherto useless because of the obscurity that hung over the battle, now opened upon the advancing columns of Mayenne with terrible effect, tearing through the ranks of cavalry and infantry, and spreading consternation and dismay wherever the shots fell. The service of the Royal artillery was admirable; the cannon of the League could not be brought into action, and after having wavered for a short time, the army of Mayenne retired in disorder behind the shoulder of the hill, which soon concealed from the wearied Royalists the multitude that seemed destined to drive them into the sea.

The battle of Arques would only deserve the name of skirmish, if the killed were alone taken into account; for the loss of the League only amounted to 400 men, and that of Henry IV. to a much smaller number. The vast importance of the result, and the strength of the army by which the attack was made, rendered the King's success well deserving of the name of a great victory.

Henry retired after the battle to Arques, whence he wrote to announce the event which had just occurred to his friends, using to one, who had ever been renowned for his daring courage, the characteristic words, "Hang yourself, brave Crillon, we have fought at Arques, and you were not there." Various anecdotes are told of his conduct during the day, some which are worthy of repetition here. Before the battle began, as he passed along the regiment of Swiss under Galati, he addressed the

old officer, saying, "Father, keep me a pike here; for I intend to fight at the head of your battalion;" and when endeavoring to rally his cavalry, he stopped the horsemen, man by man, exclaiming, "Cannot I find fifty gentlemen in all France, resolute enough to die with their King?" Riding forward, too, to bring back a regiment to the charge, he called aloud to their Colonel, "Comrade, I have come to die or win honor along with you."

The danger, however, was not over when the day of Arques was at an end;* the troops of Mayenne were repulsed, but not routed; and he immediately recommenced his attack upon the Pollet, and attempted the town of Dieppe itself. Wherever the struggle was, there was the person of the King, and three days passed in continual skirmishes, only one of which is worthy of notice, on account of an inge-

* In speaking of the day of Arques, I allude to that day on which the grand attack upon Henry's position was made; for during eighteen or nineteen days frequent conflicts took place between the two armies, three of which are marked by Henry himself, in a letter to M. de Lestelle, as very important; "combats en gros." That day—which is distinguished from the others on which engagements occurred between parts of the two armies, by the attempt to force the King's lines at Arques—strange to say, receives a wrong date in many of the most credible authors of the time, several of whom were present on the occasion. The Memoirs of the League place the attack on the 23rd of September; but a letter from Henry, dated on that very day, clearly shows that this decisive movement was over, and there can be no doubt that the true date is the 21st September, 1589.

nious artifice practised on that occasion, in consequence of which a party of the Leaguers met with a severe reverse. Instead of keeping his troops within the walls of the town, or in their intrenchments on the heights, Henry sent out a small body of cavalry, under the Baron de Biron, to brave the whole army of Mayenne in the plain. Two squadrons of horse advanced to charge it, but as soon as the soldiers of the League had arrived within a few hundred yards, the Royalist force opened, presenting two large culverins, which instantly commenced a murderous fire upon the assailants, and compelled them to retreat in disorder.

While these affairs of arms were taking place before Dieppe, other events were occurring at a distance highly favorable to Henry's ultimate designs. The corps of the Duke of Longueville, of the Count de Soissons, and of Marshal d'Aumont, had effected their junction, and were marching rapidly to the support of the King; and, on the other hand, a fleet, containing a large quantity of military stores and a considerable sum of money, had set sail from the shores of England. This timely supply reached the port of Dieppe on the 23rd of September;* on the 30th of that month, 1500 Scottish infantry disembarked;† and on the 1st or 2nd of

* Memoires d'Angoulême, collection de Petitot.

† In a letter from Henry to M. de St. Aulaire, dated the 1st October, the King states that the Scotch reinforcements arrived on the preceding day.

October, an English force, consisting of 4000 men, under the command of Lord Willoughby, entered the harbour.*

The position of Mayenne now became critical; but he lingered, unwilling to retreat disgraced, before an army so inferior in numbers to his own, till Longueville and d'Aumont were within a few marches of his camp,† and he had seen the sails of the English ships in the harbour of Dieppe. He then retired in haste; but Henry, at the head of a body of light troops, followed him as far as Gamaches; after which the King returned to make preparations with his allies for the further operations of the campaign. He was destined, however, to receive a bitter mortification in the hour of victory. While hearing the services of his religion performed in his own quarters, several of his Catholic officers expressed aloud their rage at the celebration of Protestant rites in the camp; the outcry spread to the soldiery; a tumult took place, in which some of the

* In the letter just cited Henry expresses his expectation of the arrival of his English allies on the day following; and, on the 3rd October, we find, from a letter of thanks to Queen Elizabeth, that they had reached the shores of France.

† Some authors have asserted, that Longueville, Soissons, and d'Aumont had actually joined the King before the retreat of Mayenne; but such is clearly shown not to have been the case, by a letter from Henry to Mons. de Flers, dated 15th October, (Lettres Missives, Tom. III.). Mayenne had retreated before the 7th of that month, for the King mentions the fact in a letter of that date, probably written while he was pursuing the enemy towards Gamaches.

Huguenots were wounded, and the King, with tears of indignation in his eyes, was forced to quit his quarters and finish his devotions in the open field.* Henry, nevertheless, subdued his anger; and while Mayenne sent a number of ensigns, which he had taken in one or two small towns which he had reduced in his march, together with four, captured in the trenches at Arques by the treacherous lanzknects, as proofs of his victory, to the Leaguers in the capital, Henry prepared, at the head of his united forces, to carry the more certain tidings of his own success to the gates of Paris.†

* So firmly did Henry persist in the exercise of the Protestant faith at this time, that, in a letter to Monsieur du Plessis Mornay, dated the 7th November, 1589, he says, "Je n'ay point intermis l'exercise de la religion partout ou jay esté, tellement que telle sepmaine sept presches se sont faicts à Dieppe par le Sr. d'Amours."

† In giving the above account of the defence of Dieppe and Arques, I have found many difficulties, from the very opposite statements made by Aubigné, the Memoirs of the League, Cayet, Davila, and others, who do not agree even in regard to the day on which the battle of Arques took place. One of the best, if not the very best authority, we have, for the events which occurred between the commencement of August and the end of September, 1589, is the two letters of M. de Fresne Forget, Secretary of State to Henry IV. We find in them an ample narrative of all the movements of the King; and, although the style is not that of a military man, yet the account is much more clear and precise than that of Aubigné. By the first of these letters, we learn that it certainly never was Henry's intention to besiege Rouen; that his demonstrations against that city were made merely as a feint to draw Mayenne from Etampes, and other places in the

neighborhood of Paris; and that the whole campaign was conducted upon a regular plan, the success of which fully answered the monarch's expectations. We also find by that letter (of the 7th of September), that although Henry had not supposed Mayenne could bring so large a force into the field, to pursue him across the Seine, he was yet under no apprehensions in regard to the result; and the intimation which the writer gives, that the King was determined, notwithstanding the inferiority of his numbers, to fight the enemy, even before the junction of the reinforcements he expected, and that he doubted not, soon to be once more under the walls of Paris, shows how accurately that great commander had calculated his means, and those of the adverse party—how firmly he adhered to his plan, and how clearly he had foreseen the issue. Neither can there remain any doubt upon the minds of those who read this letter, that he had early fixed upon the position at Arques, as the spot where he would make his stand, and that he left nothing to chance, which prudence and skill could accomplish. The second letter, only bearing date September, distinctly states, that Henry had determined his post beforehand; and it then goes on to give a succinct account of the battle of Arques; but one thing is to be remarked in the copy of these letters, which is found in the Memoirs of Nevers, namely, that the second epistle ought to stop at the words "so that the prisons of Dieppe are quite full of them:" *i.e.* prisoners. The rest is evidently, and beyond all question, added by another hand—probably that of Gomberville, and is clearly borrowed from the Memoirs of the League. The former part has all the marks of having been written by a person at the time, taking a deep interest in acts wherein he had a share, the latter part is full of reflections that never could have suggested themselves till long after the events had occurred; and it also speaks of what French historians had said at a much later period. Nevertheless, whether the latter part of the letter be the composition of De Fresne Forget or not, it does not in the least justify the assertion which has been founded upon it, that Henry IV. contemplated embarking from Dieppe for England when he

found himself assailed by the superior force of the Duke, and that he was only dissuaded from doing so by Biron. On the contrary, though it uses the expression, "he listened to the proposition to go into England;" it goes on at once, "but he rejected it proudly, and declared that he would never be another King of Portugal." The whole context of the two letters, indeed, proves that Henry—as soon as he found, from the desertion of many of his nobility, that a retreat from Paris was inevitable—laid out the whole plan of his campaign, resolving to draw Mayenne from his resources, to lead him to neglect the towns in the neighborhood of Paris, to retreat upon a sea-port in order to receive the assistance of England, and to choose a position in which he could maintain himself till the arrival of that assistance enabled him to resume the offensive, and march either across the country to the Loire, or back to Paris. The place which he chose was Arques; and it is to be remarked, that in no point did the military talents of Henry display themselves more strikingly, than in the selection of his fields of battle.

BOOK XI.

SEVERAL events of importance had taken place in distant parts of France during the retreat of Henry IV. from Paris, upon Dieppe and Arques. The friends of the throne, had remained inactive for many months, either awed by the daring exploits of the house of Guise, or affected by that timidity which too commonly paralyses the efforts of the lovers of peace and order in the face of agitation and tumult, but they now rallied in various provinces, and displayed once more the energies which had only slumbered. The Count de Soissons, who had been captured and held a prisoner in Nantes by the Duke de Mercœur, contrived to make his escape; and some time before the retreat of Mayenne from the valley of Arques, he had hastened to Tours, collected a large number of noblemen, and commenced his march to join the King.

Henry, however, confident in his own strength, and probably doubting the stability of his cousin's affections, commanded him not to pass the Seine, but to unite his corps with that of M. de Schomberg, who was then leading a body of 2700 German auxiliaries to the assistance of the new mo-

narch of France:* an order which the Count did not think fit to disobey. The junction of the two commanders was easily effected, and marching to Compiegne, where they were met by Marshal D'Aumont, they advanced towards Dieppe with an army, which the forces of the Duke of Longueville swelled to the number of 2000 horse and 10,000 foot.†

During the short time D'Aumont had spent in Champagne, and Longueville in Picardy, they had endeavoured to wear out the rebellious inhabitants of those provinces by a system of warfare of a terrible and desolating kind, sweeping the whole country of its produce, and obliging the population of all fortified towns to keep within their walls, with famine menacing them in the city, and the sword of civil strife pursuing them in the field.

Neither had the partizans of the League been inactive in the more remote provinces, while Mayenne followed the King towards Dieppe. Every effort was made by the adherents of the house of Guise, not only to maintain themselves by force of arms, but also to rouse the passions of the subjects against their King, and to employ their prejudices and their weaknesses as instruments to work the overthrow of the royal authority. The Count de

* De Fresne.

† Lettres Missives, Tom. III. page 43; letter dated 23rd September to Monsieur de Vivans.

Randan made himself master of the town of Issoire, and kept the greater part of Auvergne in subjection to the League. The inhabitants of Toulouse, and many other cities in the south of France, displayed, in deeds of brutal ferocity, their bigoted adherence to the faction. The agents which the League kept in pay all over the country, labored incessantly to stir up the people to revolt; and the provincial parliaments, in those districts which had espoused the cause of the Union, published the most furious and treasonable proclamations against their monarch, denouncing him as a tyrant and usurper, and menacing his supporters with the utmost penalties of the law. Such was the course pursued at once by the Parliament of Toulouse; and that of Rouen, some time after, even exceeded it in violence and impotent malice.

At the same time, the most false and absurd statements were put forth regarding the proceedings both of the League and of Henry, representing the troops of the faction everywhere victorious, the Duke of Longueville and Marshal D'Aumont repulsed by the Duke of Nemours, the town of Arques, and even Dieppe itself, taken, the English fleet defeated and driven from the coast of France, an army of German Protestants dispersed on the frontiers of Lorraine, and the King totally ruined.* Nor were the most

* That these reports speedily reached Henry's ears, and that he treated them with the contempt they merited, is shewn by

gross and criminal means neglected to decry the monarch, and alienate from him the affections of his people. Letters, forged by the partizans of the League, bearing the signatures of Henry and the Secretary of State, were published in all the towns of France, displaying designs for the total subversion of the Roman Catholic religion, and for the establishment of a system of tyranny and oppression, the most opposite to the character and feelings of the King. One of these libels was a supposed letter from Henry to the canton of Berne, in which the monarch was made to rejoice openly at the death of Henry III., to inform the Swiss that the declaration by which he had engaged to maintain the Catholic faith in France, was a mere stratagem for the purpose of meeting the necessity of the time, and to hold out the speedy establishment of the Protestant religion in France. Hints were also given, in the same document, of an intention, on the part of Henry, to give up France to be plundered by his foreign allies; and nothing was omitted which could excite the indignation of his subjects against him, except a prudent imitation of his style and language, and an endeavor to preserve some harmony between the views attributed to him and his well known disposition. Another document, of the same character, was forged by the Jesuits of Troyes with greater

the King's letter to Monsieur de Poyanne, dated 7th October, 1589.

skill, but still bearing sufficient indications of the manufactory in which it was produced. People were even placed at the corners of the streets, to spread similar falsehoods, and to cry up the actions of the League; and we are assured, by various authorities, that standards and ensigns were manufactured by the cunning artizans of the faction, and brought into Paris as trophies of victories, which had never been obtained. In his own proclamations, the Duke of Mayenne acted with more dignity and prudence; but at the same time, though occasionally using the name of the Cardinal de Bourbon as the king whom he acknowledged, he employed the terms and assumed the authority of a sovereign,* and even ventured to issue a summons, calling out the ban and arriere ban for the service of the League.

Every demagogue is necessarily, in a degree, an instrument of the passions he excites, and there can be no doubt that Mayenne was both obliged to suffer, and to perform, many acts which in his heart he condemned.

Thus, the honors shown to the memory and to the family of the assassin of Henry III. were equally impolitic and criminal. His portraits were painted with a glory round the head, his mother was sought out, and brought to Paris, where she was treated with every mark of reverence, and a sum of money

* Mem. de Nevers, Tom. 2, page 605.

was assigned to her by the Council of the Union for the immense services which her son had rendered to France.*

It would be endless to trace all the intrigues, or to record all the libels, or to comment on all the follies and crimes of the rebel faction; but it has seemed necessary, by these few words, to point out the course pursued, although it was the same that is universally followed by all persons who seek, for their private interests and passion, to overthrow existing institutions. Falsehood and delusion in regard to the motives of the assailing party, and calumny and libel against those who defend, are uniformly amongst the means employed, and generally precede, while they always accompany, a recourse to brute force, for the physical rebellion against law and order, cannot be long sustained without a moral rebellion against reason and truth.

Within a few days after the battle of Arques, the relative condition of the armies of the League and the King, was entirely changed. United with D'Aumont, Longueville, and his English allies, Henry found himself at the head of a force of twenty thousand foot, three thousand horse, and fourteen large pieces of artillery; while the soldiers of Mayenne disbanded themselves every day, as he marched on into Picardy to meet a considerable reinforcement, which had been promised him

* Pithou. Satyre Menipée. Cayet.

by the Prince of Parma. Victory, too, had restored confidence to the monarch's friends, whereas defeat had disheartened his enemies; and a vast relief, from most pressing difficulties, had been afforded to the French monarch, by the arrival of the English fleet in the port of Dieppe, before Mayenne commenced his retreat. The Royalist soldiery were already murmuring at the nonpayment of their arrears, and until he received the seasonable supply of money, which Elizabeth at that time furnished, Henry was totally destitute of the means of discharging even a part of the sums already due. With wise promptitude he instantly distributed the funds, now placed at his disposal, amongst the troops; and his alacrity in so doing, won the affection, and raised the expectation of his impoverished followers. An announcement immediately followed, that his next movement was to be at once upon Paris, and it was hailed with acclamations and rejoicing by all; for the vigor, skill, and decision he had shown, throughout the whole of the campaign, the plan of which now began to be understood and appreciated, afforded to his forces the most confident hopes of success in the proposed attempt upon the capital.*

* Charles Duchesne, physician to Henry IV., or a writer assuming his name, informs us, that while still in Normandy, Henry received a letter from the old Cardinal de Bourbon, whom the League had recognised as King, renouncing all title to the undesired distinction which was thrust upon him, and admitting fully Henry's right to the throne.

Marching on, up the right bank of the river, as if to show the whole kingdom that it was Mayenne who avoided a general engagement;* the King appeared within a league of Paris, on the 31st October, and took up his quarters in the villages of Gentilli, Montrouge, Vaugirard, and other small places in the neighborhood of the capital. On the following day he determined to attack the suburbs, and having himself reconnoitred the intrenchments which had been constructed for their defence, he divided his infantry into three parties; the first of which, under the command of Marshal Biron, was ordered to march at break of day upon St. Marceau and St. Victor; while at the same hour, the second, under D'Aumont and Damville, approached St. Jacques and St. Michel; and the third, under La Noue, Chatillon, and Sully, assailed the Faubourg St. Germain, the richest and most important quarter without the walls. The troops were excited with the hope of immense booty, and many of their leaders had a store of bitter injuries to avenge, so that the hour of attack was looked for with eager impatience on the part of the Royalist army.

Terror and confusion, on the contrary, reigned in Paris. The inhabitants were too well aware that, unaided, they were incapable of defending themselves

* In all Henry's letters, at this time, he alludes to the efforts he made to bring Mayenne to an engagement. See Lettres Missives, under the dates 16th October, 2nd November, 4th November, 1589.

against their justly irritated monarch; all the principal commanders of the League were absent, and their precise situation unknown; and the evident alarm of the Duchesses of Nemours and Montpensier, increased the apprehension of the citizens. Those who were favorable to the royal cause indulged in better hopes; but the seditious preachers, and the remnant of the Parliament, endeavored to stir up the populace to offer a vigorous resistance. The King was libelled and attacked from the pulpit, while his troops were actually under the walls,* and the monks and friars prepared to put on the cuirass and wield the sword against the object of their bigoted hatred. Nothing, however, could give confidence to the people, till, towards night, one of Mayenne's principal officers, named de Rosne, who had taken Etampes a short time before, made his way into the town with a small party of horse. His arrival restored some courage to the council of the League, and measures were instantly adopted for defending the suburbs.

On the following morning, 1st November, 1589, the attack was commenced by the three divisions of the royal army, each corps of infantry being supported by a small body of gentlemen, and a few pieces of artillery; while the cavalry, in three squadrons, commanded by Henry himself the Count de Soissons, and the Duke of Lon-

* L'Etoile.

gueville, was held as a reserve. The Parisians now found how little they were able to resist the veteran forces of the King; their intrenchments were speedily carried at every point, their barricades broken, and the Royalists rushed in, driving all before them. The most severe struggle of the day took place in the Faubourg St. Germain, where the Abbey having been fortified, held out for some time; but the undisciplined multitude were soon driven back; a large body was surrounded in one of the squares, and a terrible slaughter ensued: the gates could not be shut, before some of the royal soldiers had forced their way in, and several even reached the Pont Neuf.* They were not followed by their companions, however, and were recalled to the suburb, where the pillage had immediately begun. The artillery did not arrive till a long time after the infantry of Henry's army had been in possession of the suburbs; but the cause of the delay is not mentioned by the historians of the times, and Sully seems to imply, that there was a certain degree of unwillingness on the part of the King, to press forward into the city itself, which he ascribes to a knowledge that Mayenne, with recruited forces, was at the gates, and that the storming of Paris must either be followed by a most sanguinary struggle in the streets of the town, or by a siege, in which the Royalist troops would have had to contend with the large

* Sully.

army of the League, supported by the whole power of Spain, without the walls, and with a rebellious population within. Two other considerations might undoubtedly affect the great monarch; and his after conduct leads us to believe that they were not without some weight. Much difficulty might have occurred, had he taken the city by storm, in restraining his soldiers from committing acts, in the excitement of an assault, which would have stained his cause with the charge of cruelty towards his subjects; and an absolute impossibility existed, of maintaining his forces in the capital, without bringing upon it all the disasters of famine. He, himself, had made no provision against a siege; and the inhabitants, taught to believe that he was defeated and fugitive before Mayennne, had never imagined that he would so soon appear before their gates; so that no stores had been laid up which he might have rendered available for his own defence. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt whatever, that Henry, both before and after the assault of the suburbs, proposed to force his way into the capital itself, and an order, under the King's own hand, to Monsieur de Harambure is still extant,* directing that officer to attack the gates, while the gallant la Noue made a desperate effort, to swim the Seine on horseback, and surprise the quarter called *la Cité*. Both attempts failed: La Noue was nearly drowned in his bold

* Lettres Missives, Tome 3, page 83.

enterprise; Monsieur de Harambure was repulsed from the Porte St. Germain; and Henry, for that day, contented himself with the capture of the suburbs. Though the resistance had been obstinate, we find no record of any further excesses than the pillage of the wealthy houses, though a vague charge of avenging his father's murder upon those who were found with arms in their hands is made by some authors against Chatillon.* It is evident, from all accounts, that the peaceable inhabitants were spared; but from seven to nine hundred of the Parisians fell, and a great number were taken, as well as from ten to thirteen pieces of artillery.† Towards eight o'clock Henri Quatre entered the Faubourg St. Jacques, and rode through the streets, the people shouting with every mark of joy, "Long live the King!" as he passed along. It is not, indeed, improbable, that even a majority of the citizens were favorable to his cause, for in all popular struggles, the voices of the moderate and peaceful, however numerous, are generally overpowered by the outcry of the violent and the turbulent; and the innumerable falsehoods put forth by the League, afford just cause to believe, that their statements of their strength were as fallacious as the accounts of their success.

The rest of the day was passed, in securing the suburbs, from any efforts directed against them from the side of the town, in reducing the Abbey of St.

* Le Grain. † Aubigné, Memoires de la Ligue.

Germain, which surrendered before night, and in adopting measures to prevent outrages. Especial care was taken to guard against the slightest injury to the religious buildings; and so exact was the discipline maintained, that the mass for All Saints' day was celebrated in all the churches; and the Roman Catholic soldiery of the attacking force, proceeded to fulfil peacefully the duties of their religion in the temples of the suburbs, which they had stormed in the morning.*

After the surrender of the Abbey of St. Germain, Henry ascended one of the highest towers to reconnoitre the city, and remained some time watching the agitated multitudes of the capital, as they hurried hither and thither in tumult and consternation. He acknowledged afterwards, we are told, that finding himself, for a time, left nearly alone with one of the monks, the knife of Jacques Clement presented itself to his imagination; but no attempt was made to injure him. Amongst the prisoners, however, was Edmond, or Edmé, Bourgoing, Prior of the Jacobin convent, to which the assassin of Henry III. had been attached. He was taken with the cuirass on his shoulders, and arms in his hands; and at the same time several of the council of the League were captured under similar circumstances.

While the King had marched unopposed from Dieppe to Paris, Mayenne had crossed the Somme,

* Davila. Perefix.

and advanced into Picardy, where the town of La Fere had been surprised by the Marquis de Megnelai on the part of the League. With a view of obtaining immediate assistance, the Duke had previously opened negociations with Spain, by deputies sent to meet the envoys of the Spanish monarch at Arras, but the Duke of Parma had shown no willingness to afford the amount of aid required, unless certain frontier towns were given up to him, alleging the necessity of securing his retreat; but doubtless desiring, under such pretext to extend the Spanish territory on the side of Picardy. It would seem that Mayenne conceded the point, but difficulties were made by the towns themselves; and it became necessary both to persuade the governors to submit, and to confer in person with the envoys of the Viceroy, who agreed to send a reinforcement under Monsieur de La Motte, to reinvigorate the party of the League, but would not make any great effort in its favor, without obtaining some present and future advantages for the crown of Spain.

The important city of Amiens, devoted to the interests of the faction, received Mayenne with joy, and even offered him royal honors. This perilous distinction he wisely declined to accept; but, in order to gratify the magistrates of the place, he showed the most unfeeling coldness to the Duchess of Longueville and her mother-in-law, who were detained as prisoners by the people of the city, refusing to intercede even for a mitigation of the extraordinary

rigor with which the furious bigots of that town treated two ladies, nearly allied to himself.* The Duke was soon recalled from Picardy, however, by the letters of M. de Rosne,† who judged at once, from the course which Henry pursued, after quitting Dieppe, that an attack upon the capital was meditated by the Royalists.

Mayenne was naturally of a slow and inactive disposition, and disease, produced, it is said, by some excesses which he had committed during his stay in Paris, at the commencement of the year, had encreased his ordinary tardiness. Instead of hurrying on forthwith, he sent forward the Duke of Nemours to the assistance of the Parisians, and, had the prudent precautions of Henry been duly attended to, it is more than probable, that the capital would have been obliged to capitulate to the King, before a sufficient force arrived to restore confidence to the Council of the League. Henry had ordered the bridge of St. Maxence on the Oise to be destroyed; but Montmorency Thoré, who was charged with the important task, had been taken ill at Senlis; and the Duke of Nemours having obtained possession of the passage, reached Paris on the night of the 1st of November, with a considerable body of horse, and the intelligence that Mayenne himself was on his march. The tidings of the capture of the suburbs by the King, which were

* Mem. de Nevers, Tom. 2, page 191. † Cayet.

soon after brought to the leader of the League, roused him from his inactivity, and hastening forward with but little order, he entered Paris early on Thursday, the 2nd of the month, delivering the Parisians from the terrible apprehensions which they had justly entertained.

Henry now perceived that any farther efforts against the city itself would be vain, especially as, in his rapid march, a part of his artillery had been left behind, and had not yet come up.* He, nevertheless, remained tranquilly in the suburbs during the whole of the 2nd, and on the 3rd withdrew unmolested, taking with him four hundred prisoners.† He halted on the plain of Mont-

* L'Etoile.

† The account of the King's first attempt upon Paris, given above, is founded, as the reader has seen, upon the statements of several contemporaries; but there is a letter extant, from Henry to Du Plessis, which affords so clear an insight into both his actions and his motives, that I think it advisable to translate it almost entire. "Having, yesterday morning," he writes, "caused the suburbs of St. Germain, St. Jacques, and St. Marcel, to be attacked, they were carried in a moment; and from sixteen companies who were on guard, fourteen standards were taken, and from seven to eight hundred men remained dead on the spot, and many prisoners. Fourteen or fifteen cannons, great and small, have also been taken, which were upon the ramparts; and at the same time all my infantry effected a lodgment at the gates of the said town, without any loss on the side of my army, at least so little that it cannot be told. Last night some soldiers, who had retired into the Abbey of St. Germain, surrendered at discretion; and since it has pleased God to favor me so much in this enterprise, I have proposed to follow my object, to attack and cannonade my said

rouge, and remained for three hours in battle array, inviting the attack of the army of the League, and reproving, for the instruction of the Parisians, the boastings in which the leaders of the faction had indulged. No movement was made to meet him in the field, and he commenced his march for Montl'hery, between eleven and twelve, without any one venturing to pursue him. At Montl'hery he stopped one day, for the express purpose of giving Mayenne time to refresh his forces, and meet him in battle; but that general continued within the walls of the capital; and, proceeding to Etampes, the King laid siege to that place, on Sunday, the 5th of November.* The town was taken the same

city, which I hope to reduce to obedience, if the army of my enemies, or a part of their forces, do not enter the said town within three days; of which I have wished to give you intelligence, in order that, knowing truly how all has passed, you may make it known to all my servants; and that if my enemies set about any other false reports contrary to my interests, as they are accustomed to do, nobody may give credit to their malicious artifices: so thereupon I pray God. Monsieur du Plessis, &c."

In a postscript to the above epistle, the King adds, "While signing this letter, I have had intelligence that the Duke of Mayenne has just arrived in the city with his army, so that, there being no longer a chance of being able to force a town and an army both together, I have resolved, still, to remain here to-morrow, in order to see what attempt the said Duke of Mayenne will make, and to retire, the day after, under his eyes, to see if he will undertake what he has not yet dared to do up to this moment."

* Cayet. l'Etoile.

night, and on the following day the castle capitulated, seeing that it was vain to hope for succor from Mayenne. In Etampes, Henry remained four days,* during his stay, out of consideration for the inhabitants, who, within four months, had seen the town taken and retaken three times, he ordered the citadel to be razed, that so weak a place might no longer be an object of contention.†

On the 8th of the month, a gentleman from Paris presented himself, bearing a letter from the fair and unhappy Louisa of Lorraine, widow of Henry III., in which that Princess, in simple but most touching terms, urged Henry to take vengeance upon the murderers of her husband, and especially to do justice upon Edmé Bourgoing, whom she pointed out as the principal instigator of the deed which had brought her to widowhood. The letter was

* Several remarkable letters from the King of France to various persons are extant, dated from Etampes, November, 1589; and in one of them we find severe complaints in regard to the conduct of the Huguenots, many of whom Henry states had left him, notwithstanding his earnest remonstrance, at the most critical period of his affairs. It is apparent, too, from a letter to Duplessis Mornay, dated 7th November, that the jealousy of the Protestant party caused their sovereign nearly as much trouble and inconvenience as the bigotry and intolerance of the Roman Catholics. In a letter addressed to the Countess de Grammont, from Vendome, the King alludes to the same subject, saying, "Il n'est pas croyable les menées qui se font partout; je dis dedans nous-memes; le diable est dechainé."

† Mem. de la Ligue. Cayet.

read before the King's council, and moved the hearers to tears.

Henry replied that he would never lay down his arms till he had avenged her fully; and, at the same time, transmitted her letter to the Royal Parliament at Tours, with orders to proceed against Bourgoing according to the course of justice. That unhappy man was duly tried in the month of February following, and having been condemned, was torn by four horses. He shewed the greatest firmness at the hour of death, and steadfastly denied the crime with which he was charged, during his trial; but we find it stated, on good authority, that at the moment when he was about to suffer, the cloth having been removed from his face for an instant, and a last exhortation to confess addressed to him, he not only acknowledged having instigated one regicide, but intimated that he had meditated a similar act against Henry IV.

While still at Etampes, some of the proceedings of the League in Paris came to the knowledge of Henry, and filled him with indignation. There can be no doubt that many of the inhabitants were desirous of seeing peace restored to France by the subjection of the capital; and that exertions were made to rouse the well-disposed to an effort in his favor. All who were suspected of such intrigues were arrested immediately after the arrival of Mayenne, and four citizens of note were condemned to death. Henry, however, held in his

hands several of the council of Forty, amongst whom was one of the most popular leaders of the faction, named Charpentier; and the monarch instantly sent a trumpet to notify to the League, that if his partizans were put to death, he would execute the principal prisoners whom he had taken in the suburbs. Mayenne, nevertheless, was not to be deterred; and the news of the death of two Royalists in Paris, by the hands of the executioner, reached the King some time after at Vendome. Not without great regret, and at the urgent recommendation of Marshal Biron, Henry ordered two of the Parisians to be hanged, though their ransom had been agreed upon with the persons who had captured them, and their horses were saddled to carry them to Paris. Such deeds, when performed in a just cause, may be looked upon as acts of necessary severity; but when committed in an unjust one, are certainly crimes. Had Henry put to death every prisoner he took from the League, the law of the land would have justified him; but every act of slaughter perpetrated by Mayenne was undoubtedly a murder. Although only two of the Leaguers were executed at Vendome, in retaliation for the death of four Royalists in Paris, the example had a great moral effect, and taught the rebels more caution if not more humanity.

From Etampes, Henry proceeded, without loss of time, towards the banks of the Loire. On his march, as on his former retreat from Paris, he separated

his army into several divisions; dispatching the Duke of Longueville into Picardy; and M. de Givri into Brie; while Marshal D'Aumont was sent into Champagne, to meet a body of German auxiliaries, who were advancing from the Rhine. Passing through La Beausse he captured Joinville; and then arriving at Chateaudun, he sent a trumpet to summon the town of Vendome, which formed a part of his patrimonial territories: willing to give the people an opportunity of atoning for their past rebellion by immediate submission. For this purpose, he halted three days at Chateaudun, and was there joined by the Swiss officers who had been sent to confer with the Cantons, in order to obtain a legal confirmation of the promises made by the troops of their nation, at the death of Henry III. The reply which he now received was even more favorable than the King had expected; the Cantons declared their intention of maintaining as strict an alliance with that monarch, as had existed between them and his predecessor, and they gave full authority to the Swiss forces in his service to continue with him, and aid him in opposition to the League.*

In the meantime negotiations had taken place with the governor of Vendome, and M. de Richelieu, had twice been sent, at the request of that officer, to hear the proposals he had to make. Richelieu had returned without any satisfactory result, no offer

* Davila. Cayet.

being made to surrender the city; and no answer to the summons having been given, but vague and unseasonable hints of submission to the royal authority, if the King would withdraw his army. The governor, James Maillé Bennehard, might well feel that he had incurred the high displeasure of his sovereign. While merely King of Navarre, Henry had placed him in Vendome, which, as I have before said, was part of his hereditary territory;* and shortly before the attack of Mayenne upon Tours, the Count de Soissons had been sent, upon some rumors of an intrigue between Bennehard and the party of the League, to exhort him to maintain his fidelity, or to remove him if his treachery should be apparent. Bennehard, however, had made such vehement protestations of his attachment to the Royal cause, that he was not only suffered to *remain* in the town, but the King's council was established within its walls, and had *continued* there under the guarantee of his faith. During the whole of this time, there can be no doubt, he had been negotiating with the leaders of the League; Mayenne had marched thither direct on his way to Tours, and had made the whole of the Great Council prisoners, with the connivance of this traitor. From that day forth Benehard had shown himself one of the most virulent enemies of the King, he had pillaged the Vendomois, had put to death a number of the Royal adherents, in

* L'Etoile.

cold blood; and, to use the expression of Aubigné, "had rendered himself marvellously hated." Following his example, the people of Vendome had displayed, during the late war, all the rebellious spirit of the faction; and the moderation of Henry, in giving them the opportunity of submission, is marked with admiration by most of the contemporary writers.

Discovering, at length, that kindness produced no effect, the monarch advanced to the attack of the place; and having reconnoitered it in person, ordered Biron, instead of directing his approaches against the walls of the town, to open a fire upon the citadel itself. A small breach having been soon effected, a party was sent up to the walls to see if it was practicable. Perceiving that it was so, and that all was confusion in the place, the first body of soldiers rushed in at once; Biron the younger, and Chatillon, followed at the head of their troops, and in three hours from the commencement of the cannonade the place was taken by storm. To prevent pillage was impossible; but Henry had given strict orders that no blood should be shed, except in cases of armed resistance, and these orders were punctually obeyed. The English regiments, who were amongst the first to enter the town, afforded a remarkable example of discipline, even in the excesses of an assault, never breaking their ranks, but securing a still greater share of booty than the rest, by marching through the streets in complete order. Bennehard, who had retreated with a number of soldiers into a

house in the town, was forced to surrender at discretion, and showed in the hour of danger the cowardice which usually accompanies cruelty. Being brought before the King, he entreated, with the most abject protestations and promises for the future, that his miserable life might be spared; but Henry was inexorable, and commanded his head to be struck off without delay. A cordelier also, named Jessé, who had been one of the principal instruments of the League in the town, and had aided in opening the gates to the Duke of Mayenne, was hanged by the King's orders; but no other lives were taken, and it was remarked, that on the part of the Royalists not a single man fell in the capture of Vendome.*

A number of neighboring towns surrendered immediately after the fall of that place, and Henry, proceeding on his march, arrived at Tours on the 22nd of November, after having swept the whole country between Paris and the banks of the Loire, in the short space of eighteen days.†

* In a letter hitherto unpublished, for a copy of which I am indebted to the kindness of Monsieur Berger de Xivrey, Henry gives a succinct account of the storming of Vendome, which, though comparatively brief, confirms entirely the statements I have made above in every particular which it notices. The cordelier Jessé, it must be remarked, was moreover accused of having incited another monk to attempt the assassination of Henry III.

† The Lettres Missives show that Henry was at Vendome on the morning of the 21st, and at Tours on the 22nd. In a letter

The extraordinary rapidity of the monarch's movements gave him the greatest advantage over the tardy Duke of Mayenne; but the habits of the King, from infancy to manhood, were such as enabled him to display the incessant activity for which he was remarkable, without depriving him of due time for deliberation and council. Besides that quick decision which always accompanies true genius and clear perception, the vigorous health with which he was endowed, and the indefatigable exertions of which he was habitually capable, enabled him to crowd more actions into one day than Mayenne could accomplish in a month. Although too fond of pleasure, he did not often suffer its pursuit to interfere with the important business of the state. He was seldom more than a quarter of an hour at table, rarely gave more than three hours at one time to sleep, and was accustomed to say that he could win a battle, while Mayenne was putting on his boots. Nor was he the only one who thus estimated his powers; for Sixtus V., in conversing with some of his friends on the state of France, is known to have said, that the Bearnois, as he called Henry, would assuredly gain the day, because he spent no longer time in bed than Mayenne spent at table, and that the one used more boots than the other used shoes. The habits of a prince are almost always imitated by

from the former place, dated 21st November, he says that he will march on the following day.

his attendants, and the activity and energy displayed by the King were communicated to his officers and his soldiers. The armies which he brought into the field, though often less numerous than those of his opponents, supplied their want of strength by speed, vigilance and decision, and the promptness with which they executed the orders of their commander, continually took the adversary by surprise, and rendered numbers, and even courage, of no avail. The officers and soldiers of Mayenne, on the contrary, especially when acting immediately under his command, followed their leader's habits of procrastination, so that his principal secretary was known to leave a packet of importance unopened during four days.

Besides the characters of the two commanders, and the effects produced thereby upon their partizans, various other circumstances, independent of the events of the war, tended to strengthen the Royalist party, and to weaken, day by day, that of the League. The only cause of disunion in the former was the religion of the King. The vague schemes of ambition which had been entertained by several of Henry's adherents, so long as he was merely King of Navarre, gradually disappeared from the view of those who had formed them, after he had actually ascended the throne; and although jealous of his attachment to the Protestant faith, all the principal nobility of France, with the exception of those closely connected with the house of Guise,

strove but for one great object, from the moment that they recognized him as King.

No such unity of purpose reigned amongst the supporters of the League. Under the pretext of zeal for religion, was concealed in the breast of every one, criminal designs for his own aggrandizement. The crown of France was the great object of several of the princes, who had subscribed the act of union; and the policy of Catherine de Medicis, had contrived to roll this apple of discord successively at the feet of so many, that after her death, the hopes which she had encouraged simply for the purpose of maintaining her own authority by the divisions of others, tended greatly to strengthen the throne of him, whom she had wished to exclude for ever from the succession. The son of the Duke of Lorraine, the daughter of the King of Spain, and the Lieutenant-General of the League; the two first openly, and the last covertly, were aspirants to the great dignity which belonged to Henry IV.

The claims of the Marquis du Pont, the heir of the dukedom of Lorraine, were soon disposed of; for during the march of Mayenne upon Dieppe, he had brought a force to the assistance of the League, with the expectation of seeing himself placed at the head of its armies; but as he found no one to support his pretensions to such authority, he soon retired from France in disgust, and thenceforth took but little part in the struggles that succeeded. The King of Spain, however, continued his intrigues and negotiations,

although the Salic law, which had remained inviolate for so many years, presented an almost insurmountable barrier to the election of his daughter. Besides the difficulties opposed to his designs by the fundamental institutions of the country, several other obstacles existed, which, combined, rendered his hopes altogether chimerical. The nobles of the League were but little disposed to raise a foreigner to the throne; and as little to concede to a King of Spain the title of Protector, which he openly sought, with all the privileges and authority that he expected; and the Duke of Mayenne himself, though he did not venture avowedly to oppose the schemes of Philip, lest he should lose the supplies of money, and the support in arms, which were absolutely necessary to the maintenance of the faction, secretly thwarted the intrigues of that monarch, which were directly adverse to his own ambitious objects. The fragment of the Parliament which remained in Paris, though apparently subservient to the League, contained a large party attached to the ancient laws of succession. Like all great bodies of jurists, their conscience, their honor, and their very intellect, were bound, in forms and precedents, which were opposed at all points to the pretensions of the different aspirants. So doubtful were many members of the legality of their course, that even Barnabé Brisson himself, when he accepted the office of First President, thought fit to enter a formal, though secret, protest

before a notary, against all his own acts under the League, as performed in consequence of compulsion.* The populace of Paris, however, were in a considerable degree favorable to the designs of Philip; and the various agents whom he maintained in the capital, ceased not to urge upon the Council of the Union, the necessity of securing his aid and support, by such concessions as would justify him in continuing or augmenting the vast amount of assistance, which he had annually afforded to the League. The complicated state into which the affairs of the faction had fallen, was farther perplexed by the claims and aggressions of the Duke of Savoy, who carried on a feeble warfare in Provence and Dauphiné, endeavored to seduce the Parliament of Grenoble, and succeeded in obtaining several powerful partizans in the districts of France adjacent to his dominions; while Cardinal Cajetan brought new confusion into the party in January, 1590, not only by his attachment to the interests of Spain, but by his open attempts upon the liberties of the Gallican Church.† At the same time, the scene of dissension and intrigue was rendered but the more disgraceful, by the hardly concealed desire of Mercœur and Nemours, to dismember France for their

* L'Etoile, Tom. 2, p. 167.

† The designs with which he was sent are not concealed in his instructions from the Pope, in which his mission was stated to have for its object, "Conservare o ridurre il regno di Francia al antica vera religione catolica." Cayet.

own aggrandizement, and by the exertions of the Duke of Lorraine, to obtain the territories of Metz, Thoul, Verdun, and Sedan. Thus, day by day, the relations of one party became more clear, definite, and simple, and those of the other more obscure, vague and complicated. Amongst the Royalists one single idea, one fact, one object, produced unity of purpose and of effort, but slightly diverted and impeded by the passions and weaknesses of individuals. In the League, contending principles, opposing interests, and separate views, generated distrust, disunion, and diversity of design, calling all the minor passions into unnatural prominence, and giving to small events a fictitious importance. Henry was still King of France, though more than one half of the land was in rebellion against him; Mayenne but the leader of a faction, though the people of the capital, and a large proportion of the provincial population, pretended to obey his commands.

Knowing, at least, a part of what was taking place in Paris, and the embarrassment in which Mayenne now found himself, the King, always willing to open the way for reconciliation, carried on some negotiations with the Duke, to whom he offered far greater advantages than his conduct had merited; but Mayenne, unwilling to lose his chance of a crown, which had once been within his reach, rejected the proposals of the monarch, and sent back M. de Belin, who, having been liberated by

Henry on parole, had borne his message to the leader of the League. The Cardinal de Bourbon was still maintained as king by the remnant of the Parliament; the powers of Mayenne, as Lieutenant-General, were confirmed, and their period extended;* and the States General were called to assemble at Melun, in the month of February, 1590.

In the meanwhile, Henry, after his arrival at Tours, had received, in form, the visit of the Cardinals of Vendome and Lenoncourt, with the principal members of the Council of State, as it had been constituted under the late King. These officers were followed by representatives of the Parliament of Paris: a number of its most influential members, with du Harlay, the first President, having, by different means, effected their escape from the capital. Several of the high officers of the Crown, also, presented themselves at his court for the first time; and all came to recognize him as their legitimate sovereign, and congratulate him on his accession. The same day he gave audience to the first regular embassy from a foreign state which he had yet received, and heard from the Venetian ambassador, who had been previously maintained at the court of Henry III., the good wishes and congratulations of the Senate, with their excuses for not sending an extraordinary mission, to express their friendship towards the new monarch of France. The Pope afterwards showed himself highly indig-

* L'Etoile. Journal de Henri IV.

nant at this open disregard of his bull of excommunication, but the Venetian Senate answered boldly, and the Pontiff was too wise to agitate the question further. Nor was Henry's conduct towards the Papal see less decided, though there can be little doubt that he saw, there would be, sooner or later, a necessity for his entering into the bosom of the Roman Church. As soon as he heard that Cajetan was approaching his territories as Legate, he issued a proclamation, commanding all his subjects to treat the Cardinal with honor and respect, to forward him on his road, and afford him protection and assistance, if he was duly addressed to the court of the King; but prohibiting all men from showing him any reverence, obedience, or attention, if he were addressed to the rebellious members of the League. Cajetan, however, made his way direct to Paris; and there he no doubt suffered his own partiality for Spain, to interfere with the moderation which the Pope had enjoined. The reply of Sextus V. to the Duke of Luxembourg, who had been sent by the Royalist Catholics of France, to justify at the Pontifical court their adhesion to their Protestant King, had been gentle, though ambiguous; and Davila, who had every opportunity of knowing what took place at Rome and at Venice, assures us, that "His Holiness, in the last conversation which he held with the Legate, recommended to him several times, in pressing terms, not to show himself openly as an enemy of the King of Navarre, so long as there was any hope of his reconciliation with the

church." But the successor of St. Peter, on this occasion, found himself frustrated in his sagacious views, by the weakness and prejudices of his ministers; and this is not the only time in which the designs of wise and good Pontiffs, have been thwarted by servants, who have fancied themselves more catholic than the Pope.

The stay of Henry IV. at Tours was very short, and the rapidity of his movements astonished the rebellious Parisians, and made them tremble in their beds. Before he had been four days on the banks of the Loire, Montrichard, Montoire, Lavardin, and Chateau du Loir, had surrendered to his forces;* and on the 25th of November he again commenced his march, and advanced rapidly upon Le Mans, which had been for some time under the command of M. de Boisdauphin, one of the most active officers of the League. The governor's reply to the King's summons was bold and resolute; and as his garrison consisted of between fourteen and fifteen hundred men, besides the armed bands of the place, † a long and steadfast resistance was to be expected. Part of the suburbs was burnt by Boisdauphin's order, and the rest strongly entrenched; but the whole of the outworks were carried during the first evening of the

* The troops sent against these small towns, which, while in the hands of the League, greatly straitened the supply of Tours, were under the command of la Trémouille, Montigny, and Souvré. In Lettres Missives, tom. 3, page 88, note 2.

† Aubigné.

attack and the day following, except one, which lay on the other side of the Sarthe, and was not taken till the next morning. It would seem that the operations of a regular siege were not employed or required against Le Mans; for the hastily constructed batteries of the Royalists, having opened their first fire upon the walls on the 2nd of December, the garrison, seized with fear, demanded a capitulation; and before two o'clock on that day the place surrendered. The King, however, would not enter the town, lest his soldiery should commit excesses, but remained for some days in the suburbs, and caused the gates to be strictly guarded, to prevent his troops from pillaging. A general amnesty was granted to the inhabitants, and a grateful population came forth to cast themselves at Henry's feet, with many promises of fidelity and attachment.*

Beaumont, Laval, Chateau Gontier, and several other places, scarcely waited to be summoned, and Henry then advanced towards Alençon, having sent forward Biron to commence the siege before his arrival. But little resistance was offered by the garrison, and thus ended the year 1589, during the last six months of which, Henry had achieved more re-

* It would appear, notwithstanding the general opinion to the contrary, that Henry did enter Le Mans in person on the 7th December, for on that day, and on the 8th, he dates his letters from the town, all those that preceded having been dated from his camp before the walls.

markable enterprises, than had been accomplished by all the Roman Catholic commanders since the commencement of the reign of his predecessor. He had repelled all the attacks of his enemies at Arques; he had taken the suburbs of Paris by assault; he had captured fourteen or fifteen strong places, and a number of inferior towns, and had swept the provinces of Touraine, Anjou, and Maine, together with the Vendomois, of the forces of the League, leaving no place of importance behind him, except Ferté Bernard; in which Brissac had fixed his head-quarters, after having surprised a small body of Protestant Reiters detached from the main army of the King. The whole system of military operations was changed, and instead of the former slow and tedious marches and countermarches, in the course of which the capture of villages and fortified houses was noted as a proof of great success, France was astonished by the sight of a monarch leading his forces a hundred and fifty leagues in the midst of winter, with a heavy train of artillery, while city after city fell before him, as if his very name were victory.

From Alençon Henry marched without delay to Falaise, a town of considerable importance, possessing a citadel, which was supposed in those days to be nearly impregnable. As soon as the movements of the Royal army showed that Falaise was to be attacked, Brissac, with a considerable power, threw himself into the place, and the League published

aloud, that the successes of the King would be here brought to an end. The severity of the season, however, on which the faction reckoned as one of the greatest impediments to Henry's progress, only facilitated his advance upon Falaise, and after having reconnoitred it in person, he determined to follow the same plan which he had pursued at Vendome, and attack the town on the side of the citadel. One of the suburbs was soon taken; a battery opened upon the castle, two culverins were placed on a small hill which commanded the only communication between the citadel and the city; and in two days, a tower of the former, which defended the angle of the wall between the two, was entirely ruined, leaving a practicable breach by which Chatillon and the younger Biron led the infantry to storm. The town and all the outworks of the castle were carried in a moment, and Brissac was compelled to retreat into the keep; where, straitened for room, and wanting provisions, he was forced the next morning to surrender at discretion. The King treated him with kindness, but detained him as a prisoner;* and so surprised were the inhabitants of Paris at the tidings of this event, that the Leaguers persisted for some time in believing the intelligence to be false.† Argentan, Lisieux, Bayeux, Pont-au-de-Mer, and Pont l'Eveque, were taken by Henry

* Davila. Aubigné. Cayet. † Journal de Henri IV.

or his officers, before the 25th January, 1590, and the monarch hurried on to the last towns of Lower Normandy, in which the League had yet any force.

The siege of Honfleur, which was next undertaken, proved the most difficult that Henry had yet encountered, its position on the water, enabling the vessels of the League, not only to supply it with provisions, but to sweep the trenches of the royal army with their guns.* The news that arrived from other parts of France, caused the King to press the attack with the utmost fury, though they at the same time encouraged the Governor to resist. So fierce was the cannonade, however, that on the seventh day of the siege, a flag of truce was sent out to demand a parley, and Henry, who was eager to lead his troops in another direction, agreed to a capitulation, in favor of which the garrison were allowed to remain within the walls unmolested four days, upon the condition, that if not succored by Mayenne or Nemours within that time, they should surrender Honfleur to the royal forces. There can be little doubt that such terms would not have been granted by Henry in ordinary circumstances; but many changes had lately taken place in the relative

* Aubigné. It is to be remarked, that Henry had been aware, ever since the 8th of January, that Mayenne was making preparations to attack him, and that he had laid siege to Pontoise, as the King mentions the fact in a letter of that date addressed to Madame de Grammont.

position of the two great parties which divided France, and the King found it absolutely necessary to alter his own plans to meet the altered state of affairs. So late as the 7th December, 1589, Henry had proposed, after the siege of Alençon, to turn upon Lower Normandy, and even to carry his arms into Britanny, having received intelligence that a design was entertained by the Spaniards to seize upon St. Malo, with a view to further hostilities against England.* A month elapsed without his intention being shaken; and in a letter to the Duchess of Montmorency, written on the 7th January 1590, he still refers to his proposed expedition into Britanny. But during the siege of Honfleur, intelligence reached him of the defeat and dispersion of a large body of Lanzknects, which M. de Sancy had raised for his service, by the troops of the Duke of Lorraine. Sancy, he was informed, had only been able to keep together twelve hundred men out of five thousand; but this small number having been joined by a party of reiters, was advancing into France, and it became of great importance to favor their march by operations in the neighborhood of the capital. At the same time, the state of Upper Normandy seemed to invite the King's approach. Verneuil had surrendered to the Count of Soissons; Evreux had been taken by Biron, and a number of inferior places had voluntarily submitted to the royal forces

* Lettres Missives, tom. iii. p. 98.

on the left bank of the Seine. Moreover, both the daring proceedings of the League in Paris, where the faction was fortified and consolidated by the presence of the Legate, and the rumored march of a large body of Spanish troops from the Low Countries, to the support of Mayenne, rendered it necessary that Henry should strike a fresh blow of sufficient vigor and importance, to dissolve the combinations forming against him.

Such were the circumstances in which the King consented to grant easy terms to the garrison of Honfleur; and undoubtedly it was from a due consideration of all these facts, that he determined to march at once up the Seine, and not for the mere purpose of raising the siege of Meulan, in consequence of a pressing letter from Sully as stated by many writers. In fact, Henry's resolution was formed before he was aware of Mayenne's attack upon Meulan, which is abundantly proved by two letters dated on the 29th of January, 1590, the very day of his march from Honfleur. In the first of these, addressed to de Fresne, his envoy at the court of Elizabeth, the King gives an account of the events which had taken place in Upper Normandy, and mentions his approaching departure from before Honfleur, without referring to the siege of Meulan, but merely expressing a hope, that his journey would effect something towards the advancement of his cause. In the second, to the Countess of Grammont, he tells his mistress distinctly, that the

Duke of Mayenne is with the Legate and the Spanish ambassador in Paris.

Thus his determination must have been formed before he became aware of the danger of Meulan. Nevertheless, a subsequent letter to Monsieur du Plessis, dated from Bernay, would seem to show that his movements had been accelerated, and his course fixed, by intelligence, received on his march, of the operations of Mayenne against Meulan, to which the Duke had laid siege after having taken Vincennes and Poissy.

Commanding one of the principal passages of the Seine, the possession of Meulan was undoubtedly of vital importance to the Royalist party, especially as Mantes was already in the hands of the League; nor had it been neglected by Sully, who had been left behind upon the banks of the river, during Henry's rapid march to Tours, with orders to provide for the defence of the towns in the neighborhood of his own estates. But, though strongly fortified, advantageously situated, and supplied with ample stores of provisions and ammunition, the batteries of the League had been so well placed, and the fire was so tremendous, that at the date of Sully's letter,* there seemed little chance of its being able to hold out many days.

* I must here remark that there are many difficulties regarding the date of Sully's letter, and it is my own belief that, though Henry certainly received intelligence of the danger of Meulan

Whether the tidings of the danger of Meulan reached the King before or after he commenced his march from Honfleur, it is certain that he hurried forward without a moment's delay; but it is equally certain, that he had a greater object in view than the mere deliverance of the garrison, or the preservation of the city. The position of Mayenne himself was perilous, at the moment when Henry received intelligence of his operations. A part of his forces were on the right bank of the river, pressing the town from that side; a large body and a portion of his artillery were on the left bank; and while the Royalists, holding the fortress on the island, impeded the free communication between the two divisions of the rebel army, the rear of the forces on the left bank was menaced by Marshal Biron, at Evreux, and by the Count de Soissons, at Verneuil.* It was hardly possible for Mayenne to escape from such a position without risking a battle, or suffering a severe loss, and Henry felt but little doubt that he should be able to destroy the detachment on the left bank, even if he could not force his opponent to a general engagement. The latter, however, was his great object, and all his letters at this time show the sanguine hopes of effecting it

before the 31st of January, Sully's urgent appeal did not reach him till the 16th of February, if so soon.

* See letter from Henry to Mons. de Beauvoir, dated 12th of February, 1590.

which he entertained. No means were neglected which might secure a favorable result in the anticipated contest: messenger after messenger was despatched to the known adherents of the Royal cause, urging them to join their monarch's standard without delay. All the detachments within the large circle over which they had been spread, since the King had marched from Tours, were called in. Montpensier, who had been left to receive the surrender of Honfleur, was ordered to advance with all speed; the Duke of Longueville was written to; Humieres and du Plessis were required to hasten to Verneuil; and the President de la Court was directed to aid du Hallot in driving the tardy or unwilling to the rendezvous, by threats of depriving them of their rank as nobles.* The King's determination was loudly announced, not to lose sight of the enemy's forces, till he had brought them to battle; and the parliament of Caen seconded Henry's efforts to swell the numbers of his army, by severe denunciations against those who should neglect to obey his summons.

These important preparations for a great and decisive struggle were not suffered to delay the King's advance to the relief of Meulan. He left Honfleur, accompanied by no other force than his heavy cavalry and horse arquebusiers, on the 29th

* See Lettres Missives, from the 31st of January to the 12th of February.

or 30th of January,* and reached Bernay on the 31st of the month. Thence marching towards the scene of Mayenne's operations, he accomplished his junction with the Count of Soissons and Marshal Biron, and fixed his head quarters for two or three days at Ivry. The time occupied by the march from Honfleur, however, and by the detour towards Verneuil and Evreux, had enabled Mayenne to obtain intelligence of the King's movements, and to withdraw all his troops and artillery from the left bank of the Seine, thus frustrating Henry's design of cutting off the detachment on that side by a coup-de-main. Nothing, however, could have been effected sooner, even if the French monarch had proceeded to Meulan at once, without seeking the aid of Biron and Soissons; for so few were the troops which accompanied him from Honfleur, that even after having been joined by his two officers, his army only numbered between six and seven hundred regular cavalry, and from a thousand to twelve hundred horse arquebusiers. With this small force he contented himself with throwing supplies into the besieged place, and then turned towards Breteuil, to await the arrival of the Duke of Montpensier and the other forces which he had ordered to join him.

Mayenne, in the meantime, having obtained information of the real numbers of the Royal army, left a small body of troops to continue the siege of

* Some expressions in Henry's letters render it doubtful which was the real day of his departure.

Meulan, and passing the river in force, advanced as far as Ivry in pursuit of the King. Finding that the monarch had already marched to Breteuil, he did not think fit to follow him farther; and Henry himself remained convinced, that his adversary had not any intention of giving him battle on this occasion, notwithstanding the great disparity which existed between their respective forces. During the absence of Mayenne, the garrison of Meulan made a successful sortie, and captured or destroyed a great quantity of ammunition and military stores, which perhaps might influence the Lieutenant-General of the League in his determination to return to the siege of that place.

Ere Henry had been three days at Breteuil, the number of his troops was greatly increased by the arrival of considerable reinforcements of cavalry; and the Duke of Montpensier, having approached within a day's march with the main body of the army, was ordered to follow rapidly towards Meulan, while the King hurried forward at the head of his cavalry, taking the town of Nonancourt by storm on the way. The night after the capture of Nonancourt, Henry once more slept at Ivry; and it has been remarked that he thus, in the space of a few days, twice crossed the plain, which a month after he chose as his position, in a battle that tended more than any other event in his career, to fix the crown of France upon his head. On the following day he again appeared before Meulan, still hoping

to find a part of Mayenne's army on the left bank of the Seine. Disappointed in this expectation, Henry entered the town in person, and with Sully and a few attendants, ascended the tower of the church of St. Nicaise to examine the situation of the enemy. The guns of Mayenne were at the moment pointed directly against the church, and as the King mounted the stairs, a cannon ball passed between his legs.* He remained some time in the steeple; but when he was about to return, it was found that the stairs had been carried away by the enemy's shot, so that the King and his attendants were obliged to let themselves down by a rope and a cross stick.†

Notwithstanding the furious cannonade which the enemy kept up upon the town of Meulan, the garrison, re-assured by the presence of the King and his army on the left bank of the river, boldly asserted, that they could maintain their defence against the forces of the League for at least six weeks; and, in the hope of drawing Mayenne into a general engagement, Henry, soon after his arrival, marched on again, with the intention of attacking some of the strong places held by the League upon the Seine. No sooner had he decamped, however, than Mayenne, by a coup-de-main, made himself

* Pierre Matthieu.

† Sully. A note in the Journal de Henri IV. wrongly states, that this event occurred when Henry was advancing upon Paris from Arques; but the army of the League was not then in sight.

master of a fort upon the bridge of Meulan, which commanded the town, and the garrison saw themselves in a few hours reduced to such a state, that resistance was almost hopeless.* Messengers were despatched to carry this disastrous intelligence to the King, and reached his quarters at Houdan about midnight. Without a moment's delay he sent off reinforcements to support the troops in the place and to enable them to defend it till he could return in person; and, early on the morning after, he followed with his whole army, greatly mortified, it would appear, at being thus compelled to abandon the plans he had been about to execute.† He instantly took energetic measures

* The fort here mentioned was probably merely a large tower upon the bridge.

† I am inclined to believe that it was upon this occasion that Sully urgently pressed Henry to return to Meulan, which called forth the well known impetuous note from the King. If the date affixed to that note (*i. e.* 18th February) is at all correct, it could have nothing whatever to do with the march from Honfleur, as Henry was in the neighborhood of Meulan before the 4th of that month. In my account of all the monarch's movements on the left bank of the Seine, I have followed his own statements in a letter to Monsieur de Beauvoir. By an error of the press, or the copyist, this letter is misdated in all publications. The date affixed is: Gaillon, 12th Feb. Now Henry did not arrive at Gaillon till the 22nd; and in the letter itself he speaks of the capture of Poissy, which took place on the 17th, and of the raising of the siege of Meulan, which occurred on the 21st. The date should be the 22nd of February. The original letter has apparently been lost.

to remedy the disaster which had occurred, and to force Mayenne to raise the siege. For the latter purpose the Baron de Biron, at the head of a body of chosen troops, was detached to surprise the town of Poissy, which enterprise was effected with skill and courage; and in the meanwhile, after a furious attack and defence, the fort upon the bridge of Meulan was recovered by the Royalist forces, the men, under a tremendous fire, sliding along the railings of the bridge which had been left, when one of the arches between the fort and the town was destroyed. The garrison of Meulan having been thus placed in as favorable circumstances as before, Henry resumed his march up the Seine, with the determination of menacing the capital; but ere he had advanced many leagues, he received intelligence from the Marquis d'Alegre, that he had contrived to seize upon the citadel of Rouen.

No opportunity of obtaining possession of that important city was to be neglected, and the King instantly marched to take advantage of the first success of Alegre, though he pronounced the enterprise of that officer ill-timed and unpromising. The same tidings reached Mayenne nearly as soon as the King; and finding that Henry was hastening towards Rouen, he abandoned the siege of Meulan, after having made one more unsuccessful effort to take the place by assault. Before the Royal army reached Gaillon, however, Alegre was forced to notify, that the troops he had thrown into the citadel of Rouen had capi-

tulated to the Leaguers of the city; and the monarch, having no means of crossing the Seine, in order to bring Mayenne to battle, turned towards Dreux, and laid siege to that town.

The leaders of the League had hitherto been in great want both of money and cavalry, and a letter of the President Jeanin, dated February, 1590, shews the extreme distress to which they had been reduced, and the promises, as yet unfulfilled, which were daily reiterated and broken by the King of Spain. A change, however, now took place in their favor. The Duke of Parma, indeed, was unwilling to diminish his own forces, to assist the Roman Catholics of France, without some greater advantages than Mayenne was inclined to grant; but the orders of Philip to afford aid to the League became so decided, that a large body of men-at-arms and horse arquebusiers, under Count Egmont, began their march for France, while Mayenne was besieging Meulan. From that place the Duke hastened to join his allies, and scarcely had Henry commenced the siege of Dreux,* ere he learned that the army of the League, now greatly superior to his own, was advancing to its relief. The King's resolution was immediately taken, and the siege of Dreux was raised, as to fight in that position was impossible. There is good reason to believe, indeed, that Henry had already fixed upon the field of Ivry, as a spot on

* I only find letters from Henry bearing the date of Dreux on the 6th and 7th of March.

which to strike another decided blow for the peaceful possession of his crown; but he had now to consider the great inequality of the two armies, the superior numbers of that of Mayenne, the high discipline of the Spanish troops, and the more efficient state of their equipments. To have avoided a battle, however, would have been, in the words of one of the historians of those days, "to oppose his own nature, which was prompt, and inclined to courageous resolutions." His army too had been reinforced under the walls of Dreux, by the junction of Marshal D'Aumont's division. The difficulties also of retreating before a superior enemy, presented themselves to his mind; and, when he remembered the exhausted condition of his finances, the hopelessness of obtaining any supplies for the payment of his Swiss troops, and the probability that they would disband themselves, and return to their own country, if he made a retrograde movement, he was induced to resolve upon risking a general engagement, while he had yet the means of doing so with any chance of success.

In order, then, to approach the position in which he had determined to fight, he commenced his march upon Nonancourt, on the morning of Monday the 12th of March.* The artillery was first put in motion, all the baggage followed, and then the army, in order of battle; the greatest regularity and strictest discipline being enforced by the King's

* See the King's circular letter upon the battle of Ivry, and the "Discours veritable," published by Jamet Mettayer at Tours.

command. The weather, however, had by this time changed; the frost had passed away, the rain poured down in torrents; the roads, which in that part of the country are still very bad, were scarcely passable, and night fell long before the troops reached the place of repose. As the darkness came on, a violent thunder-storm succeeded, and a curious meteoric phenomenon presented itself in the sky, to the eyes of the weary and exhausted Royalists. The clouds, illuminated by the electric fire, took the form of two large armies, mingling and charging each other, as if red with the sanguinary fight; and after presenting this extraordinary spectacle for some time, the black vapours rolled again over the scene, and hid the result of the aerial combat from the eyes of the wondering spectators. This phenomenon must have taken place high in the air, and extended over a wide space, for it was seen by the Royal forces on their march to Nonancourt,* and by the Duke of Sully at Pacy, at a distance of more than twenty miles.

After undergoing all the fatigues of a long march in such inclement weather, the troops of the King arrived at Nonancourt, which they had taken a few days before, and there found comfortable quarters for the night, large fires being lighted to dry the wet garments of the soldiery. As the Duke of Mayenne was known to be approaching rapidly, a general order was given for each man to be prepared

to fight upon the morrow, and during the night, the King himself drew a plan of the ground, and the order of battle, which he laid before his council on the following morning, demanding their free opinion regarding it.* Not the slightest change was even suggested. The plan was then put into the hands of the younger Biron, who acted as Marèchal de Camp, in order to make the arrangements generally known, and the march was begun for the village of St. Andrè, lying at the distance of about four leagues from Nonancourt. Beyond that village extended the great plain of Ivry, containing several villages and a small wood, called *La Haye des près*,† and here the King drew up his forces in order of battle, a little in advance of St. Andrè.

His army formed nearly a straight line between the village I have mentioned, and that of Fourcanville, the centre being very slightly farther back than the two wings. Having found at Coutras the great advantage of arranging his cavalry in squadrons rather than in line, he followed the same plan on the present occasion, dividing his horse into seven corps, one of which was held in reserve under Marshal Biron. The extreme left was commanded by D'Aumont, having Montpensier on his right, with the Grand Prior and M. de Givri in command of the light horse on the same side, but thrown forward,

* Mem. de la Ligue. Discours veritable.

† The Discours veritable calls this wood La Haye des pics.

and supported by four cannons and two culverins* on a slight elevation. The fourth squadron was that of the Baron de Biron, consisting of about two hundred and fifty horse, with a strong body of chosen infantry, the whole nearly on a line with the light horse. The King's own corps next took its position, composed of between five and six hundred men-at-arms, in the first rank of which were almost all the great nobility of France. In the rear of this corps, between the King and the reserve under Marshal Biron, were three regiments of French infantry, and the regiment of the guard farther to the left.† The squadron of the King was also supported on either hand by two regiments of Swiss. On the extreme right was a small body of German cavalry, under the command of the Count de Schomberg, backed by a party of French infantry, resting upon the first houses of the village of St. Andrè. Each squadron of cavalry was accompanied, as at Coutras, by a small body of arquebusiers, a precaution which was peculiarly necessary on this occasion, as the gentlemen of the Royalist army had altogether given up the use of the lance during the rapid

* The ordinary accounts state three cannons and two culverins; but I have followed the "Discours veritable," which was printed by authority.

† Aubigné. Cayet and the Memoirs of the League declare that the French guard was on the right, but this is the only point on which their account materially differs from Aubigné's, who is supported in his statement by the "Discours veritable."

movements which they had lately been forced to make.

While taking up his position, Henry, who had despatched messengers, when he decamped from Dreux, to call in all his detachments, received a sudden reinforcement by the arrival of a party under the Prince de Conti, and Du Plessis Mornay; and shortly after, he was joined by the garrisons of Dieppe, Evreux, and Pont de l'Arche, consisting of about four hundred men.* By this time the parties of light horse, which had been sent out to reconnoitre, returned with the intelligence that Mayenne was rapidly advancing in order of battle. No sooner did the Duke hear that the King had departed from before Dreux, than, imagining the royalists were about to retreat in order to avoid an engagement, he put his forces in motion in the hope of overtaking them. Some confusion was the consequence of this precipitation; and when he found the army of the King waiting him in battle array, his troops were in no condition to undertake the combat without every disadvantage but that of numbers.† He determined, therefore, not to commence the attack till

* Several other noblemen joined him in the course of the morning.

† So fully persuaded was he that the Royal army was at a considerable distance, that he had sent forward his quarter-masters with some light troops to take possession of the villages round the plain of Ivry, intending to pass the night there. See Lettres Missives, Tom. iii. p. 163, and the Discours veritable.

the following day, and the evening of the 13th passed in skirmishes for a village, which lay in front of the King's position. It was first occupied by the troops of the League, but they were soon driven out by some of the French guard, and the hamlet remained in the hands of the Royalists when night fell. Towards evening Mayenne retired to a short distance from the field, near the banks of the Eure, while Henry, after seeing his adversary turn back, withdrew his troops into the villages of Fourcanville and St. Andrè, where the greater part found comfortable quarters and abundant provisions.* The forces of Mayenne were less conveniently lodged, being principally kept under canvas, and consequently obtained but little repose after the long and rapid march which they had made during the preceding day.

Having given all the necessary orders for securing

* The despatches of Henry himself give us but little information concerning the battle of Ivry, though they serve occasionally to rectify an error even in the account published by authority, called the "Discours veritable." The Gazette writer, from time to time, was moved by that pernicious spirit of seeking to make the most of his materials, which has gained a bad name for bulletins. Thus, on the present occasion, in order to give greater lustre to the victory of the following day, he represents Henry's army as suffering greatly from the inclemency of the night, and states that the greater part were under canvas. The King more simply and straightforwardly declares, "Enfin la nuit nous contraignit chacun de se loger; ce que je feis aux villages les plus proches."

his position early on the following morning, Henry threw himself down on a mattrass, and took two hours repose. The greater part of the night, however, he passed in prayer, recommending the Catholics of his army to follow the customs of their own church, and address themselves to God for success on the following day. It would seem, that several of the Catholics themselves joined the monarch in his devotions, and one of them, in a gay and confident tone, requested the King to put at their head, before the battle, the clergyman who had led their prayers previous to the victory of Coutras. Hope and expectation, indeed, reigned in the army of the King, and the memory of many great successes went with him to the field.

By daybreak on the following morning, the monarch was once more on horseback, and before ten o'clock the whole army had resumed its position; but soon perceiving that the wind, which had risen, would blow the smoke of the guns into the eyes of his troops and hide the movements of the enemy, Henry, by a very slight change to the left, and in advance, remedied that inconvenience, without any great alteration in his arrangements.

The army of the League was marshalled with less order and precision than that of the King; and great confusion exists in the accounts of different historians, regarding the exact array of Mayenne's forces. The wings of the League were considerably

more advanced than the centre, so as to present the form of a crescent, and in the midst of the main body, composed almost entirely of foreign troops, appeared the small squadron or cornet, as it was then called, of the Duke of Mayenne, comprising about two hundred and fifty chosen men. On either hand of the commander-in-chief was a large party of the Spanish lances; the two numbering together, between twelve and thirteen hundred horse, under the command of Count Egmont. This body in the centre, was joined before the battle, by the corps of the Duke of Nemours, whose position had previously been upon the right, and the numbers were thus swelled to about eighteen hundred cavalry, who acted together during the day. On either side of this force, appeared the two Swiss regiments of Pfiffer and Berlinger, who had remained in the service of the League, notwithstanding the alliance between the King and the Swiss Cantons, and these were again supported by regiments of French infantry. The wings were composed of foreign and French light cavalry mingled with infantry, and the extreme points of the crescent were formed of German cavalry called Reiters, amounting in all to twelve hundred men, led by the Duke of Brunswick and Bassompierre.*

* Such is the account given by the "Discours veritable," which coincides in many points with that of Davila; but, as I have before remarked, the statements, even of eye witnesses, are confused and contradictory in the extreme.

The numbers of the army of the League it is very difficult to discover, and, indeed, we can very seldom depend upon the statements, even of contemporaries, regarding the forces engaged in any battle. In one place, Davila reckons the army of Mayenne at four thousand five hundred horse, and twenty thousand foot; but he evidently greatly exaggerates the strength of the infantry, while Aubigné states the numbers at five thousand cavalry, and eight thousand foot, and Cayet says that Mayenne was accompanied by more than four thousand horse, and twelve thousand foot. Henry himself, in his despatch to Monsieur de la Verune, governor of Caen, does not venture even to guess at the numbers of his adversary, but merely says, that the prisoners state their army to have consisted of four thousand horse, and twelve thousand foot, thus confirming the account of Victor Cayet. The Royalist force did not amount to more than two thousand horse, and about eight thousand foot. Just as the battle was about to commence, however, Sully arrived from Pacy, bringing with him his own company, and two companies of English horse arquebusiers, under Colonel James. Several other reinforcements joined during the morning; and it cannot be doubted that the flocking in of zealous friends, while Henry occupied the plain of Ivry, tended greatly to encourage his forces, and to make them forget the superiority of the enemy. As at Coutras, the army of the League appeared covered

with glittering trappings, lace and embroidery, while that of the King displayed nothing but cold grey steel.

As soon as his troops had taken up their position, Henry rode along the line, mounted on a powerful bay charger, clothed in complete armour, but with his head bare, speaking words of hope and confidence to the soldiers, and exhorting them to shew the same valor here, that they had already displayed in many a perilous enterprise. His countenance was bold and fearless; but it was remarked, that, moved by his own words, his eyes more than once filled with tears. He represented to his troops, that the road to safety, as well as to glory, lay before them; that the crown of France depended upon their swords; that there were no new armies to fall back upon in case of defeat; no other nobles in France to take the field for him, if they who surrounded him should fail. He then put himself at the head of the line, where he could be seen by all, and heard by many; and with his hands clasped, and his eyes raised to heaven, he exclaimed: "I pray thee, oh God, who alone knowest the intentions of man's heart, to do thy will upon me as thou shalt judge necessary for the weal of Christendom, and to preserve me so long as thou knowest I am needful for the happiness and repose of this land, and no longer."*

* Cayet. I have chosen the more simple words of Cayet, in preference to the better periods of Davila, and others, because they appear more in accordance with the character of the King.

Then turning to his own squadron, he took his casque, surmounted by a large plume of white feathers, and said: "Companions, God is with us. There stand his enemies and ours. Here is your king. Upon them! and if you lose your cornets, rally to my white plume. You will find it in the road to victory and honor."* During some part of the morning, one of his officers remarked to him that he had provided no place of retreat, but Henry replied: "There is no other retreat than the field of battle."

Before commencing the engagement, the King performed one of those generous and honorable acts, so well calculated to win all hearts, and carry the love of his people along with him. It would seem, that Schomberg, who commanded the Germans in his service, had previously demanded the pay of his troops, which was long in arrear, and that Henry had replied sharply: "No brave man ever asked for money on the eve of a battle." At this moment of peril, the King's heart smote him for what he had said; and approaching the old officer, he spoke thus: "Monsieur de Schomberg, I have injured you. This day may be the last of my life, and I would not take away the honor of any gentleman.

The *Discours veritable* does not report Henry's words, though it mentions that he addressed his troops. It was, perhaps, more consistent with the name of that manifesto, to omit, than to insert, the exact expressions used on such an occasion.

* Aubigné.

I know your valor, and your merit, and I beseech you to pardon and embrace me."

"Sire," answered Schomberg, "you wounded me the other day it is true, but to-day you kill me; for the honor you do me, will force me to die for your service."*

It is probable that immediately after this incident a movement in advance,† mentioned by the King in all his despatches, was made on the part of the Royal army, for, till between ten and eleven o'clock, the forces of the League were at such a distance, that it was possible for Mayenne to avoid a battle. The King still apparently imagined that such might be his adversary's intention, for he says in his circular letter respecting the great victory of Ivry, that the

* Perefix.

† This movement in advance forms one of those curious points of history, in regard to which the facts stated by the person best informed of all that took place, are denied or unnoticed by contemporaries and eye witnesses. Almost all the historians of the time state that the battle was fought on the exact field which Henry had at first selected. The *Discours veritable*, indeed, says that the Royal forces advanced a hundred and fifty paces from its original position; but Henry's letters leave no doubt that the distance must have been much greater. In the first place, he says, speaking of the position of the Leaguers on the 13th March, that they were "sy loing de moy, que je leur eusse donne beaucoup d'advantage de les aller chercher sy avant:" and, in speaking of their appearance in the field on the 14th, he states that they were still farther from him than on the preceding day.

enemy's troops having appeared still farther off than they had been on the preceding evening, he resolved to approach so close that they must of necessity fight; and having, in consequence, gone to seek them even to the spot where they had planted themselves, "from which they never advanced but so far as was necessary to come to the charge," the battle took place. Judging from this adherence to his position, and from the stillness of his skirmishers, that Mayenne was determined not to commence the engagement, Henry took advantage of an error which the Duke had committed in the choice of his ground, and which exposed his cavalry scattered over the face of a slope. He accordingly ordered his artillery to open a fire upon the adverse squadrons, which was executed by M. de la Guiche, with great precision and effect, nine discharges taking place before the Leaguers could fire a gun. Nearly at the same time, news was brought that Monsieur de Humieres, Mouy, and about three hundred horse, were hurrying up to join the King,* and were barely a mile distant; but Henry would not delay the engagement. The battle was now begun by the light horse advancing on the part of the League, followed by a heavy body of lanzknechts; but they were met in full career, by Marshal d'Au-

* Davila makes them arrive before, but Cayet and Aubigné are agreed on this point, and they are confirmed by various letters from the King, which state that they came early in the battle.

mont,* at the head of about three hundred men-at-arms, and driven back in confusion to the edge of the wood, called la Haye des près, where d'Aumont, according to the commands he had previously received from Henry, halted his small force, and returned in good order. While this was taking place on the left of the King's army, a body of reiters from the enemy's right, advanced against the light horse of Givri and the Grand Prior, but were repulsed; and having made their charge and fired their pistols, retired, as was the common practice of the German troopers, to form behind the men-at-arms. The Royalist light horse, however, had been thrown into some disorder by this attack, and were immediately after assailed by a squadron of heavy cavalry, consisting of Walloons and Flemings, who, with their long lances, bade fair to overthrow Givri and the Grand Prior, when the Baron de Biron, by a well timed charge in flank, broke through their ranks, receiving two wounds in his advance. Montpensier now moved forward to encounter the same corps in front, and after having his horse killed under him, succeeded in restoring the advantage to the Royalists in that part of the field. Before this was accomplished, Mayenne, with the great bulk of his cavalry, advanced against the King himself. He was accompanied by Count Egmont, the Duke of Nemours, and the Chevalier d'Aumale,† and had on

* Aubigné says this was the Marshal; the Discours veritable and Cayet, his son.

† Cayet.

his left a body of five hundred carabiniers, on horseback, all picked men, well armed and mounted,* who, galloping forward till they were within twenty yards of Henry's division, poured a tremendous fire upon it, and then gave place to the men-at-arms. At that moment, however, the King spurred on his horse, two lengths before any of his troops, and, followed by his whole squadron, "plunged," to use the words of Aubigné, "into the forest of lances," which lay before him. Even that bitter satirist cannot avoid giving way to some enthusiasm in describing the charge of his royal master. "By the first strokes," he says, "appeared what quality can effect against quantity." For more than a quarter of an hour the struggle was fierce, and the small squadron of the King was lost to the sight of the rest of the army in the dense cloud of Mayenne's cavalry. At length the Leaguers were seen to waver; some fled, others followed, and in an instant after, all was rout and confusion amongst the immense body of horse, which a few minutes before had moved up so gallantly to the assault. But as the enemy fled from before him, Henry was exposed to a new danger, and found that the battle was not yet won. As he issued forth from the midst of the flying masses of Mayenne's horse, with but twelve or fifteen companions at his side, and exactly between the two regiments of adverse Swiss, three

* These troops were armed with breast and back plates, and morions.

troops of Waloons, who as yet had not taken any share in the battle, appeared ready to charge his little band. D'Aumont, however, with the Grand Prior, Tremouille, and the gallant Givri, advanced to his deliverance, and this fresh body of cavalry was routed in a moment. In the heat of the mêlée Henry's standard-bearer was killed, and one of his pages, who bore in his casque a white plume similar to that of the King, fell beside him. A report had spread instantly that the King was slain, and a momentary panic had seized the persons, round the spot where he was supposed to have fallen.* But when he reappeared from amidst the dense crowd of enemies, covered with blood and dust, a loud shout of "Vive le Roi!" burst from the ranks of the Royalists, and added speed to the flight of the enemy. Marshal Biron, who had remained immoveable, watching the progress of the fight, and ready to act wherever a great necessity presented itself, now joined the monarch, saying, "This day, sire, you have performed the part of Marshal Biron, and Marshal Biron that of the King."

"Let us praise God, Marshal," answered Henry, "for the victory is his." The Swiss infantry of the

* Sully gives a different account of the combat between the King's squadron and that of Mayenne from any other writer of the day, declaring that, at one time, the Royalists gave way both on the right and left; but he was himself wounded very early in the battle, and it is probable that the panic caused by the report of the King's death, is what he alludes to.

League still remained untouched, however, for the fight had been almost entirely between the horse of the two armies; but Biron, after a consultation with Henry, advanced at the head of the reserve, supported by several regiments of French and Swiss foot, and the Catholic Swiss were permitted to lay down their arms with promise of quarter.

The King with all the cavalry he could rally, galloped after the enemy, and pursued them to the very gates of Mantes; but the delay which had taken place, in consequence of the parley with the Swiss, favored the escape of the fugitives, who fled in two directions: Nemours, Bassompierre, Tavannes, and others, taking the road towards Chartres, with a confused mass of horse; and Mayenne, with the rest, hurrying to Ivry, at which place there was a bridge over the Eure. Henry attached himself to the latter body, anxious to capture the Duke; and, spurring on with all his furious energy, he soon overtook the rear of the enemy, who were found either scattered, in complete disarray, over the ground near the little town, or crowding the road towards the bridge. Mayenne had already passed; and in order to secure his own safety, he gave the cruel order to break down the bridge, before a great body of his cavalry, principally reiters, could cross the stream, which is there deep and strong. Some of the unhappy men, who were thus left behind, to the mercy of an irritated enemy, cast themselves into the river, and were drowned,

while the Germans hamstrung their horses in the streets of Ivry, and forming a rampart of the carcases, attempted to defend themselves with their pistols.

Finding that he could not ford the river at Ivry, Henry hastened to the small town of Anet, where he effected his passage, and ceased not the pursuit during the day. A great number of prisoners were taken, but many of the fugitives were killed in the flight, and many others were afterwards slaughtered in the woods by the peasantry. It has been reported that Henry, at the close of the battle, exclaimed: "Save the French, but put to death the foreigners," and this order has been praised as worthy of that great King. In such commendation, I can by no means join; nor can I consider so inhuman a command, as at all consistent with the character of Henry. I am not, indeed, inclined to believe that it was ever given; for we find, on the contrary, that it was by the King's own command that the Swiss were spared; nor is it likely, that, supported by so many foreigners, as were to be found in his own army, he should commit an act equally cruel, unjust, and impolitic. No such order is mentioned by Aubigné, by Cayet, or by the author of the earliest account of the battle, printed originally in 1590, and reprinted in the memoirs of the League in 1595. It is also proved, that during the pursuit, the King labored earnestly to save the lives of the enemy's soldiers,

in several instances, rescuing them from the hands of those who were about to kill them. Doubtless, the report originated in the fact, that all the Lanzknechts of the League were put to the sword without mercy; but there is no proof whatever that Henry gave any directions to refuse quarter even to them; and the treachery they had committed at the battle of Arques, was still so fresh in the minds of many of the Royalist officers, and in their own minds also, that there is little probability of any offer to surrender having been made or refused. The French infantry in arms against the King, in general shared the fate of the Lanzknechts, which is another reason for believing that the foreigners were not singled out for slaughter; and the manner in which Henry himself speaks of the destruction of this large body of foot, is powerful to prove, that, personally, he had nothing to do with the severity that was shown to them. After speaking of the surrender of the Swiss, he says: "The Lanzknechts and French infantry had no time to take such a resolution, for they were all cut to pieces: more than twelve hundred of the one, and as many of the other: the rest prisoners, or scattered among the woods at the mercy of the peasantry." A number, indeed, of the French infantry threw themselves into the Swiss regiments, and received the same terms from the King, but the greater part was certainly destroyed, and the rest yielded at discretion.

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The victory was one of the most complete that had been gained during the civil wars. Unlike the battles of Jarnac and Montcontour, the field of Ivry displayed no powerful body of the enemy, retreating in good order from the plain; but all was rout and confusion. The white standard, sprinkled with black fleur-de-lis, of the Duke of Mayenne, was taken, and also the red standard of the Spanish General, together with twenty cornets of cavalry, sixty ensigns of the French, Flemish, and Germans, twenty-four ensigns of the Swiss, and all the artillery and baggage. Above a thousand horse fell upon the field, amongst whom were many persons of great distinction; and four hundred gentlemen were made prisoners.* The number drowned or killed in the pursuit was never accurately ascertained, but more than two thousand foot were put to the sword, and a great many more were taken in flight, besides those who had thrown themselves into the battalions of the Swiss, and surrendered with them.

Count Egmont, fighting gallantly, was killed very early in the battle, "worthy of honor for his bravery," says the historian, "had he not employed it against those who were in arms to avenge his father's death." Of those who fled, the chiefs being

* The account given by the King himself states, that from nine hundred to a thousand of the horse fell on the field, and that from four to five hundred had been made prisoners, besides all those who had been drowned in the Eure.

the best mounted, in general escaped from the pursuers; but a great number of the most serviceable noblemen, attached to the League, either fell, or were made prisoners on the field; so that the cause of the faction was not only shaken by the disgrace of a great defeat, but by the loss of at least one half of its bravest and most experienced supporters.

On the part of the Royalists, we are assured only twenty gentlemen were slain, amongst whom were the gallant Schomberg, the Marquis de Nesle,* Clairmont d'Entragues, de Crenay, and M. de Longoulnay, who was killed at the age of seventy-two. Many more were severely wounded, and amongst the latter was the Baron de Rosny, afterwards Duke of Sully, who was early shot in the calf of the leg, and subsequently received several other wounds, the last of which had nearly cost him his life. I do not find any accurate account of the farther loss of the Royal forces, but, from all statements, it was very considerable.

The Duke of Mayenne, in passing through Mantes, at the gates of which place he was for some time refused admission, spread the false intelligence, that, although he himself was defeated, the greater part of the Royal army had fallen, and that Henry had been slain in the battle; nor was it till the following morning, when the Vidame de Chartres presented himself, and summoned the town to surrender in

* M. de Nesle, it would appear, did not die on the field.

the name of the King, that the inhabitants were made aware of the deceit which had been practised on them.

One remarkable coincidence, regarding the battle of Ivry, is worthy of notice here. On the same day the Royal forces triumphed in three different provinces of France. A battle less important, but hardly less sanguinary, was fought under the walls of Issoire, in which the Count de Randan, commanding the troops of the League, was defeated and killed by Curton, and two other Royalist officers, with a loss, on the part of the faction, of more than two thousand men;* and in Maine another victory was gained under the following circumstances. A

* At the same hour of the same day Henry IV. announced to M. de Curton his victory over Mayenne at Ivry, and Monsieur de Curton informed the King of the defeat of the Count de Randan. The two letters have been preserved, and are curious, both from the similarity of many expressions, and as significant of the characters of the writers. Henry himself thus writes:—

"Curton, I have just beaten my enemies on the plain of Ivry. I write it to you without delay, being persuaded that no one will receive the news with greater pleasure than you. This 14th of March, nine o'clock in the evening.

"HENRY."

The letter of Curton is as follows:—

"Sire, I have just beaten your enemies on the plain of Issoire. The Count de Randan, who commanded them, is just dead of his wounds. My son has also been wounded, but I hope he will not die. Rastignac, Lavedan, and Chazeron have done wonders. I will send your Majesty a longer detail to-morrow. This 14th of March, 1590: nine o'clock in the evening."

double traitor, first to the League, and afterwards to the King, M. de Lanzac, no sooner heard that Mayenne was marching to attack the sovereign, to whom he had lately sworn fealty, than putting himself at the head of a large body of the faction, he assailed the town of le Mans, hoping to take it by a coup de main. He was repulsed from the walls, however, and, being hotly pursued in his retreat by the Governor of Alençon, was totally defeated before the town. Intelligence of these advantages did not reach the King of France for some days; but it was sufficient joy for the hour, to feel, that the long wished-for opportunity of trying his strength with the League in a fair field had been granted, and that his success had exceeded his utmost hopes: that all the powers of his adversary had been put forth; that, supported by superior numbers, foreign aid, the virulence of faction, and the furious zeal of superstition, Mayenne had met him on the plains of Ivry, and suffered a complete and irretrievable disaster. The throne, which he had inherited from his ancestors, had hitherto tottered beneath him, but this day it had been fixed, no more to be shaken; the crown, that was his of right, had been thrown by circumstances into the arena of civil strife, and on that bloody field he had won it with his own right arm. Henry, we may believe, with true devotion, (for he uses the same expressions to his people, to his officers, and to his private friends,)

ascribes the glory to God; and all that seemed wanting on his part to reap the fruits of the great victory, which had been granted to him, was promptitude, vigor, and decision.

BOOK XII.

After having pursued the Duke of Mayenne to the gates of Mantes, Henry IV. passed the night of the 14th of March, 1590, at Rosny, where he was shortly afterwards joined by Marshal d'Aumont. The King was at supper when that officer made his appearance; but, rising from table, he advanced to meet his gallant supporter, and, taking him in his arms, made him sit down to the meal with him, saying, in his usual frank and cheerful tone: "It is quite reasonable that you should take part in the feast, since you have served so well at the marriage."

The towns of Mantes and Vernon surrendered immediately,* so that Henry had now the entire command of the Seine from Rouen to Paris, and all his letters written on that night, of which several have been preserved, show the most energetic resolution of following up his victory without a moment's delay. The army of the League was not only defeated, but dispersed; the Duke of Nemours, with a number of those who had saved themselves from

* The narrative published by authority at Tours states that Mantes did not surrender till the 21st, but Henry's letters of the 18th mention both Mantes and Vernon.

Ivry, was at Chartres; Mayenne, and a very small force, had fled from Mantes to St. Denis; no foreign assistance could be hoped for by the faction for many weeks to come; consternation and confusion reigned in Paris; not a fortified town shielded it from the victorious army, and two marches would have brought the King to the gates of the metropolis. Had Henry advanced at once with the troops at his command, the capital must inevitably have submitted; had he even given two days' repose to his army, and then marched on, he would have arrived while the rebellious citizens of Paris were still in the first wild panic, which followed the intelligence of Mayenne's defeat; for the news was not generally known to the Parisians till five days after the event had taken place. But a delay occurred at Rosny, which has not been satisfactorily accounted for; and until it is shown, that it was impossible for the King to execute the vigorous plan of action against the League, which his letters of the 14th March to La Noue and the Duke of Longueville announce, the halt in the neighborhood of Mantes must be looked upon, as one of the greatest errors he ever committed.

During fourteen days Henry remained within one march of the field of Ivry; and, as far as we can trace his occupations at the time, he was engaged in gathering together his troops, endeavoring to obtain reinforcements, knighting some gen-

tlemen who had distinguished themselves in the late battle, examining the accounts of Monsieur D'O, the superintendent of finance, and attempting to wring some supplies of money from that treacherous and fraudulent officer. The hours which these affairs left free, were devoted to the chase, or to amusements less pardonable. The penury of his treasury, in consequence of the malversation of his superintendent, has been generally assigned as the cause of the monarch's long delay; but had he displayed on this occasion, the energy which generally characterized all his movements, and marched on at all risks to Paris, there can be little doubt that the Swiss and German regiments would have followed, even without payment of their arrears. The Duke of Longueville, with a considerable body of French troops, and some new foreign levies, amounting to six thousand men, was ready to join him; La Noue had received orders to advance; the importance of the enterprise would have brought numbers to his standard who had not time to be present at Ivry; his appearance before the gates of the capital would have given courage and decision to his numerous partizans within the walls; and there is every reason to believe, that Paris would have surrendered upon reasonable terms. He lost the opportunity, however, and he also neglected other matters of considerable importance. The Queen of England, who had often afforded him such seasonable assistance, was forgotten in the midst of pleasurable

or pressing occupations, and received no formal notification of the victory at Ivry for weeks after it had been obtained.

Very few letters written by the King's own hand during the period of his sojourn near Mantes are now extant, and authentic contemporary records of his proceedings at this time are rare. One act, however, must not be omitted, which, equally generous and wise, redounded to his honor and served his best interests. On the field of Ivry, two regiments of Catholic Swiss surrendered to the King's forces, after having been abandoned by the cavalry of Mayenne's army; and during some days they remained in uncertainty regarding their fate. On the 22nd of March, however, Henry sent them back to their native country, accompanied by M. de Viger, as an envoy to the Swiss Cantons; and, to leave nothing undone that could enhance the favor, Henry caused them to be supplied with provisions on the march, furnished them with money, and restored to them the ensigns which had been taken from them on the field. At the same time, in a letter full of dignified kindness, he required the Cantons to reprimand them, for their violation of the treaties subsisting between Switzerland and the crown of France.

However small might be the amount of money which the monarch granted to the necessities of the Swiss officers, it must have been afforded with difficulty, for it was not without great exertion that he obtained any supplies at all from the superin-

tendent of finance. That officer was at length obliged to disgorge some of the large sums he had received; and, putting his troops in motion on the 28th of March, Henry commenced his operations against Paris, by securing the command of the river above that city. For this purpose he marched towards Corbeil, taking Dreux by the way, and undertook the siege of Sens, of which town he hoped to obtain possession by the influence of his friends within the place. In this expectation he was disappointed; but Corbeil, Lagny, Melun, Provins, Bray, and Montereau were speedily taken.

In the meantime, however, measures had been adopted by his adversaries to frustrate his design upon the capital; and their success removed to a distant period, the great object of the pacification of France. While the King was still at Mantes, the legate Cajetan, the Spanish Ambassador Mendoza, the Archbishop of Lyons, and all the principal leaders of the League in the metropolis, gathered round the Duke of Mayenne at St. Denis, and eager consultations were held for the deliverance of the city from the impending danger. Messengers were dispatched in haste to the Duke of Parma, beseeching him to afford at once the utmost assistance in his power to the party of the League, in order to prevent its entire dissolution. Stores of all kinds were brought into Paris; the Duke of Nemours hastened thither from Chartres, with the Chevalier d'Aumale, and all the troops that could be quickly col-

lected; and envoys were sent to the Pope, the King of Spain, the Duke of Savoy, and every prince attached to the League, requiring immediate aid at their hands; while Mayenne himself, after having employed all those means which he thought necessary, and found practicable, for the defence of the capital, proceeded to the frontiers of the Low Countries, for the purpose of carrying on the negotiations with the Duke of Parma without further delay. The Italian Prince, in the midst of innumerable difficulties, evinced no great alacrity to succor the discomfited leader of the League; and Mayenne was forced to visit Brussels in person before he obtained even a promise of effectual assistance.

To this time is generally attributed the first proposal of a conference between Cardinal Cajetan and envoys from Henry. "The Legate, having discovered that the King was approaching Paris," says the chronicler of those times, "and that the town was not in a state to defend itself, determined to speak of peace; and for that end, proceeded to Noisi with the Cardinal de Gondy, Villeroy, and the Italian prelates of his suite." Upon this statement of the Journal de l'Etoile, almost every author who has written upon the history of Henry IV. has charged Cardinal Cajetan with the dishonest but not uncommon act of opening negotiations with that monarch for the sole purpose of amusing him, till Mayenne could receive reinforcements

and the capital could be prepared for defence. Doubtless the proposals subsequently made by the Legate were captious and tending to no useful result; but the statement of l'Etoile is false, in fact; and it is but an act of simple justice to Cajetan, to show that, in demanding a conference, he could not have in view the designs attributed to him. The letter, in which the prelate first requested a meeting with Marshal Biron, was received by that officer on the day of the battle of Ivry;* and, as it must have been written some time before, it is clear that Cajetan entertained a desire for the interview which he solicited, not only long ere Paris was threatened by the army of the King, but at a period when Mayenne was marching on, at the head of a vastly superior army, to give Henry battle, with every hope of success. The words of the monarch himself, in a letter to the Duke of Luxembourg, written before the Royal army had made any demonstration of attacking the capital, leave not the slightest doubt of the fact.

Although the victory at Ivry had greatly changed the situation of the King, he consented that

* Lettres Missives, Tom. 3. page 184, letter dated from Mantes, 25th March, 1590. Many of the details given of this conference, and also of the statements regarding all that immediately succeeded the battle of Ivry, even in de Thou, are entirely imaginary. Thus, some writers represent La Noue as present at Ivry, and offering the King very wholesome counsel the night after the battle. La Noue was many miles from the field, and did not join Henry for a considerable time.

Biron should meet the Cardinal at Noisi, and the conference accordingly took place. The proposal then made was simply, to assemble the States General, and this was coupled with a demand for a cessation of hostilities, the object of which was very evident. The negotiation, under such circumstances, terminated abruptly, and, though there was an attempt to renew it after Henry had taken Bray, no progress was made.

Having obtained complete command of the Yonne, the Marne, and the Seine above and below Paris, Henry, without further pause, advanced upon the capital, and seized the bridges of Charenton and St. Maur.* A bridge of boats was then thrown over the river at Conflans, and a battery erected upon Montmartre, with another at Montfaucon, the guns of which fired some shots into the town on the eighth of May.

On the same day, the Cardinal de Bourbon, named by the League Charles X. died at Fontenoy le Comte, somewhat to the embarrassment of the faction, who were by no means prepared to elect another monarch. No sign of any intention to surrender the capital, however, manifested itself amongst the council of the League; the preachers were vehement in their exhortations to the people, beseeching them to die, sooner than to make peace

* 25th April is the date given by l'Etoile, but this is evidently erroneous. The King did not arrive at Chartres till the 9th May.

with a heretic;* and the furious decrees of the Parliament of Rouen were published in Paris, declaring all persons who adhered to the King, guilty of high treason. Every effort was made to supply the town with provisions, and to furnish it with soldiery; troops forced their way in from time to time, and arms were put in the hands of a great part of the population, so that, at the time when Henry sat down before the place, with twelve thousand foot and three thousand horse, it was calculated that the capital contained at least fifty thousand fighting men.† The people, however, were by no means well contented; Henry had numerous partizans in the city, and the symptoms of revolt were so strong as to induce the council to take severe measures to suppress the free expression of popular opinion. With many classes, indeed, the fury of bigotry was as powerful as ever; and a body of thirteen hundred monks and priests was formed, at the head of which was seen in arms the Bishop of Senlis, with the curate of St. Cosme for his sergeant. Barefooted Capuchins appeared bearing a cuirass over their frocks, and Dominicans with the arquebuse or pike in their hands, while rectors and curates walked about with hats, plumes, and swords, and prelates assumed the helmet and couched the lance. But the hands of these holy and Christian brethren of

* L'Etoile. Journal de Henri IV.

† Cayet. D'Aubigné makes the King's infantry amount to 14,000, and the cavalry to 2,500.

the Church of Rome were not very skilful in the use of the implements of war, and the secretary, or almoner, of the Cardinal Legate, was killed in his master's carriage, by a salvo which the clerical militia fired to do him honor.

Nevertheless, though the materials of the garrison of Paris were of such a heterogeneous kind, the city offered a gallant resistance. In the first attack made upon the Faubourg St. Antoine, the Royal troops were repulsed,* and La Noue was

* L'Etoile says that the first attack was repulsed, and La Noue wounded. Henry, on the 14th of May, writes that he has taken a suburb of Paris, and that La Noue is wounded; but it is shewn that Faubourgs St. Martin and St. Antoine were attacked on different days. The statements, and more especially the dates given by the letters of Henry IV. differ frequently from those afforded by the Journal de l'Etoile, and wherever the two sources furnish accounts incompatible with each other regarding operations without the walls, I have preferred the authority of the monarch himself. The journal is certainly very valuable, but still I have many doubts of its authenticity as a whole. There are parts that bear internal evidence of having been written by a contemporary and an eye-witness, and I believe they have, with justice, been attributed to L'Etoile; but I cannot free my mind from a suspicion that great gaps in the manuscript have been filled up by a later hand from very insufficient data. The whole account of the siege of Paris, however, I am inclined to think authentic, although it differs greatly from the statements of the King; and, perhaps, even more because of that difference. L'Etoile was within the walls of Paris, and the citizens were kept in ignorance of many things that were passing even at their very gates, which naturally caused errors as to what was occurring without; but the pictures of the state of the city, of the temper

slightly wounded. It was evident, however, that the King's soldiers daily gained ground; nearer and more near his forces encircled the capital; and the strange, and, perhaps, unparalleled spectacle was displayed, of an army of fifteen thousand men blockading two cities, Paris, and St. Denis, which contained together, more than six times its number of armed men, and gradually reducing them to the very extreme of famine. The garrison of the former did not lose courage, notwithstanding the dearth of all things within the walls; and numerous sallies, in which the divisions of Nemours and Aumale were sometimes successful against the bodies of Royalists opposed to them, kept up the spirits of the people. A decree of the Parliament, published on the fifteenth of June, forbade any one of whatsoever quality or degree, even to speak of surrender to Henry of Bourbon; and the edict was enforced by drowning several persons in the Seine, who ventured to express an opinion in favor of submission, while others were hung, on the charge of having held some communication with their sovereign.

Day by day, however, Henry drew his troops

and actions of the people, are certainly those of an eye-witness, and had this portion been written at an after period, many of the natural mistakes of a contemporary would have been corrected by the subsequent development of the facts. L'Etoile does not mention the capture of the suburbs at all, though he implies that they were taken, and all other writers state the fact plainly, as well as Henry himself in his letter to Madame de Grammont, dated 14th of May.

more completely round Paris; one source of supply after another was cut off; wheat became dear, and was at length entirely exhausted, and bread was made of oats and barley for the rich, while the poor were forced to content themselves with bran. It was in vain that the leaders displayed their gallantry, by issuing forth against detached bodies of royalists, and by preventing Henry from capturing one small post or another; it was in vain that the Spanish Ambassador, and the Cardinal Legate distributed large sums in charity. Famine reduces gold to dross; and when the Archbishop of Lyons threw some handfuls of money amongst the starving populace, before the courts of justice, the people would not even take the trouble to pick up the pieces, bidding him throw them bread, for they could not eat silver.* At length, by the end of June, the scarcity had become so intense, that it was found necessary to visit the houses of the ecclesiastics and the monasteries, in order to oblige the body which had so long urged on the war, to bear their proper share of its inconveniences. Immense stores of grain and biscuits were found; and the priests and friars were compelled most unwillingly to contribute to the support of the poor.† All the dogs and cats of the city were then brought in,

* The above particulars are taken from the Journal de Henri Quatre.

† The Jesuits resisted, and complained more angrily than any of the other fraternities.

slaughtered, and boiled, but the relief afforded was small, and every day persons were found dead or dying on the pavement, from the effects of privation; while the ornaments of the churches were, in some instances, taken to be converted into money. The jewels of the crown were sold, and processions, imploring God's aid in rebellion, perambulated the streets; while promises of lamps and ornaments, in case of deliverance, were made to our Lady of Loretto.

Nor was St. Denis less straitened than Paris; the same necessity reigned within its walls, till at length, when each person in that town had been reduced to four ounces of bran per diem, the place capitulated, and the garrison received favorable terms from the monarch.*

The obstinacy of the Leaguers in Paris, however, was not to be conquered, though the famine had reached the most awful pitch, and we are told that the shrieks of the women and children for bread, were horrible to hear.† The kind heart of the generous Prince was touched, by the thoughts of the sufferings which he himself inflicted; and although it was evident, that if he maintained the rigor of the blockade, Paris must fall, before the united army of the League and the Duke of Parma could come to its assistance; though his own force

* St. Denis capitulated on the 5th of July, and was surrendered on the Monday following at midday; the King having himself remained up all Sunday night, to ensure that the place received no succor.

† Cayet.

was daily increasing by the arrival of Chatillon, Nevers, and others, yet he wavered in his resolution more than once.

During the night of the 23rd of July, a number of the miserable inhabitants let themselves down from the walls, and some even made their way to the feet of the King himself,* beseeching him to give them food, or to suffer them and their families to quit the dreadful desolation, to which Paris was now reduced. Henry could not resist the appeal, and the same night he gave passports for three thousand. More than four thousand attempted to take advantage of this act of clemency, but their numbers being remarked, a part were driven back by the soldiery.

There now became, daily mutinies amongst the citizens; and more and more strict were the means taken to repress them; every one who ventured to murmur, was pointed out as a partizan of the monarch, and day after day executions took place.† But as resistance began to show itself more strongly, the commanders determined to amuse the people with

* Journal de L'Etoile. This fact is confirmed by Henry's letters to Madame de Grammont.

† There can be no doubt that Henry had not only numerous partizans, but emissaries in Paris, and that many of the tumults which arose, originated in their suggestions. But on the other hand, many of the distinguished leaders in Henry's army were found ready for love or friendship, and sometimes even, it is said, on less pardonable motives, to suffer provisions to enter the gates.

the hope of peace, and the Legate was commissioned to confer with the Marquis of Pisany on the subject. Their interview terminated without result, and the King, learning that provisions, though in small quantities, found their way into Paris, and prevented the wealthy leaders from feeling all the bitterness of that privation, which their pertinacious rebellion inflicted upon their poor followers, resolved upon making a general attack upon the suburbs, which, besides the alarm it would occasion, had for its object to render the blockade more effectual. Midnight, on the 24th of July,* was fixed upon for the enterprise, and while the Royal army, separated into ten divisions, marched from all quarters to the assault, Henry, with a small body of friends, watched the events, from a gallery on the heights of Montmartre. The sight was magnificent, though terrible; and I will describe it, as nearly as possible, in the words of one who was present. "The attack commenced at midnight by a frightful noise of artillery, to which the town replying on its side, no one would have judged aught, but that the immense city was about to perish by fire, or by an infinity of mines sprung in its heart. Never was there a spectacle more capable of filling the mind with dismay. Thick whirlwinds of smoke, across which broke, at intervals, sparks and long lines of

* Some writers fix the attack upon the suburbs on the 27th, but the date I assign is given by the account published at the time.

flame, covered the whole of that species of world, which by the alternations of the shadow and the light, seemed now plunged into black darkness, or swallowed up in a sea of fire. The roar of the cannon, the clash of arms, and the cries of the combatants, added to this object every thing that is frightful, which was redoubled by the natural horrors of the night. This scene lasted two whole hours, and ended with the entire reduction of the suburbs, not excepting even that of St. Antoine, though from its great extent, they were obliged to begin the attack at a distance. They then blockaded the gates of the town, so that nothing could thenceforth go in or come out without the permission of those who guarded them."

I will not pause to enter into details of all the woes and the crimes, which took place day by day in Paris. Not Rochelle itself has suffered more in any of the memorable sieges which it has undergone, than did then the capital of France. All natural food was consumed; the most loathsome objects were resorted to, and exhausted; human flesh succeeded; the dead were disinterred and eaten; the bones of the cemetery were ground for bread; mothers devoured their children.

Again and again the compassion of Henry gave alleviation to the distress of the people; multitudes were allowed to depart, first women and children, then ecclesiastics and old men, then the poorer, then the wealthier class; and every day his generous

kindness pushed back the prize of success which was within his grasp.

There were persons who pressed him to risk an assault; and there can be little doubt that such a measure would have proved successful; for the exhausted people could have offered but a faint resistance, as was shewn by the feeble defence of the suburbs, which were taken in two hours, though at no point, the assailants amounted to fifteen hundred men. But Henry would not permit the attempt; and when urged to any of the extreme means which were suggested, he replied:—"I am their father and their King; I cannot hear the recital of their calamities, without being touched to the bottom of my soul, and seeking to alleviate them; I cannot prevent those who are possessed with the fury of the League from perishing, but to those who seek my clemency I must open my arms."

On the second of August, before which time thirty thousand persons are said to have been destroyed by famine, the leaders of the League, finding that the people could no longer be restrained, met in the Hall of St. Louis, and agreed, after much deliberation, to send the Cardinal de Gondy, and the Archbishop of Lyons to treat with the King for a suspension of arms, and for permission to visit the camp of Mayenne, who having now been joined by a considerable body of troops, had advanced to Meaux. Henry granted them an interview on the

8th, at the Abbey of St. Antoine,* and a long account is given of the conversation which took place on that occasion, of the accuracy of which I find no proof.† But a summary of the King's decision is preserved, signed by his own hand, and from it we find; that Henry reprimanded the Envoys for bringing him powers addressed to the King of Navarre; that he then went on to declare his affection for his people of Paris, and his willingness to show them the utmost forbearance, upon the condition of their submission to himself direct, and not by the intervention of a third party, who could not, he said, love them as well as he did. In regard to their demand of permission to visit Mayenne, the King declared that, as he knew that visit would merely tend to fill the Parisians with vain hopes, he must insist that the people should treat with him without the Duke; in which case, he would grant them terms of capitulation, it being understood as a basis, that if within eight days, from that date, the Duke of Mayenne did not compel him to raise the siege by battle, the town was absolutely to be surrendered into his hands. At the same time he

* L'Etoile places this interview on the 5th August; but Henry's letter to the Parliament of Caen distinctly marks the day as the 8th, while, strange to say, the account published by the King's printer at Tours, fixes the meeting on the 6th.

† Two long statements, regarding this interview, materially differing from each other, have been published; the one in L'Etoile, the other in the account of the siege of Paris, printed by Jamet Mettayer at Tours.

promised that, on these terms being agreed upon, the deputies should receive passports, in order to urge Mayenne to succor Paris by force of arms.*

The Cardinal and the Archbishop subsequently proceeded to Meaux; but by this time, Mayenne had learned that the Duke of Parma was already on the frontier. He therefore sent them back to encourage the Parisians, and amuse the King, if possible, by further negotiations.

It is clear that Henry deceived himself in several respects. In the first place, he thought that the inhabitants of the capital would be touched by the clemency he showed them; but he knew not the spirit of faction, which teaches men to regard every thing that is done against them as a cruel injustice, every thing that is done in their favor as their indubitable right; and the citizens hated him for their sufferings, without thanking him for his clemency. In the next place, he imagined that their resolution would never hold out for the length of time which it actually endured; and that the efforts of his friends within the walls, the famine that afflicted all, and the presence of his army at their gates, would drive the leaders to surrender, many weeks before the period at which they began to treat. In

* All the accounts I have met with mention the fact of the King having distinctly demanded that Paris should treat for herself, and surrender, unless succored or comprised in a general treaty of peace within eight days. Yet we find that the Parisian Envoys were allowed to visit Mayenne without any formal recognition of the above-mentioned terms.

the third place, he did not believe that any events in France, would induce the Duke of Parma to leave the Low Countries destitute of troops, at a time when it was torn by a fierce civil war; and he supposed that if that Prince did take so rash a step, there would be no difficulty in forcing him to a battle, which Henry now earnestly desired. He was even heard to say, that for a general engagement with the enemy, he would give one of his fingers, and for a general peace, two.

The first message which the envoys of the League brought back to the King from Mayenne, was to the effect, that the Duke desired nothing but peace. At the same time, however, Mayenne took means to assure the Parisians, that there was nothing he dreamed of less than a treaty of pacification. The next tidings which reached the monarch were, that the Duke of Parma was marching to join Mayenne at Meaux, and that the Italian Prince must be made a party to any farther negotiations.

Henry now found how far he had deceived himself,* and the course which was to be pursued under the existing circumstances, was vehemently debated in his council. The proposal of the King, was, to

* It would appear that Henry made a reconnoissance of Mayenne's position at the head of a large body of cavalry before the junction of the Duke of Parma; but found him too strongly posted to be attacked. Why he did not attack the Italian Prince on the march, however, is not apparent, as he was now at the head of twenty five thousand men.

leave a part of the army in the suburbs, to advance with the rest to Claye, in the great plain beyond Bondy, and there to await the attack of the Dukes, in a position which was defended by the woods and rivers, and which would still enable him to maintain the blockade of Paris. La Noue, du Plessis Mornay, and Guitry, supported the views of the monarch. Turenne, who had just arrived from Guyenne with three hundred cavalry, and three thousand arquebusiers, offered to secure the rear of the army against any efforts of the Parisians; and there can be hardly a doubt, that had this course been followed, Paris would not have held out ten days. But Marshal Biron advised a still bolder course, and proposed to raise the siege altogether, to advance to Chelles, and there to dare the Duke of Parma to a battle with all the advantages of position. The Marshal supported his opinion with heat and vehemence, and Henry, in an evil hour, gave way, and followed his imprudent suggestion. What judgment the skilful Duke of Nevers formed of this plan, we do not know; but we learn, that he blamed severely the negligence, by which, the Duke of Parma had been permitted to march on unopposed into the heart of France, alleging, that he ought to have been met upon the frontier, and that those who thought he would be driven to fight, were little acquainted with his genius.

Before I proceed to notice the movements which followed, it may be necessary to mention several

events which had occurred during the siege of Paris, and which I have omitted hitherto, in order to bring them succinctly before the reader's eyes in this place. The numerous towns in which Henry had found it necessary to leave garrisons, (some of considerable strength), as he advanced upon the capital, had reduced his army to about fifteen thousand men, when the siege of Paris and St. Denis commenced; but many reinforcements poured in, as the probability of a battle became generally rumored throughout the country, and various successful enterprises against scattered bodies of the enemy, set free the detached parties of Royalists in different provinces. The Prince de Conti, accompanied by several noblemen of Normandy and Maine, attacked, and took, after a vigorous resistance, the town of La Ferté Bernard: Serolles, and Desteaux, with a part of the garrison of Metz, defeated a large body of the troops of Lorraine, who had just captured a small fort in the neighborhood: Chateaudun, which had been taken by the Leaguers of Orleans, was speedily forced to surrender at discretion, by D'Aumont, and the Prince de Conti. Various minor parties of Mayenne's troops—the fragments of the rout of Ivry—were defeated in Picardy by the gallant Humieres; and an attempt made to surprise Senlis by the rebel leader Rosne, was frustrated with great loss on the part of the assailants.

Nor had Henry himself remained all the time of

the siege beneath the walls of Paris. Rumors reached his camp of Mayenne's small army, gathering strength on the frontiers of Belgium, and a report was spread, that as soon as Balagny had joined him from Cambray, the Duke would advance to the assistance of the Parisians. To ascertain the truth of these statements, and, if possible, to strike another blow at the power of the League, Henry himself marched from Gonnesse at the head of fifteen hundred French and German horse, and hurried on by forced marches towards Laon. The enemy, however, immediately retired into that town, and the King returned to his camp, with the satisfaction of knowing that Mayenne was in no condition to compel him to raise the siege of Paris. The news of the Duke's retreat, he took care to communicate to the citizens of the capital, by letters dated the 15th June, in which he also revoked the passports he had granted to the Archbishop of Lyons and several other envoys, who were about to proceed to the camp of the Duke, on the pretence of urging him to enter into negotiations for a general pacification. Intercepted letters had shewn the monarch, that the real purpose of the deputation was the direct reverse of the pretended object; and he severely reproved the Parisians for the deceit they had attempted to practise. Nevertheless, as I have shewn above, he not only suffered the inhabitants of the capital, at a later period, to send a new mission to Mayenne, but, so great was his anxiety

to win them by lenity, rather than subjugate them by force, that he violated in their favor the ordinary rules of war, permitting, during the last months of the siege, women, children, scholars, and even the clergy, to quit the town, and shutting his eyes to the entrance of provisions to feed the starving people, while they were arming the hand of the assassin to attempt his life.* The necessity of raising the siege of Paris might be bitter; but he had prepared an alleviation for his disappointment by the benevolence which enabled the city to hold out.

On the 29th of August, according to the scheme agreed upon, Henry withdrew his troops from the suburbs of Paris by night, executing that difficult operation with great prudence and ability. He then marched on to Chelles, and took up a position on the high grounds near the chateau of Brou, having before him a small plain bounded by a rivulet, on the other side of which was a marsh. On the same day the army of the Duke of Parma began to appear on the side of Meaux, and the Italian Prince mounted a little hill to reconnoitre his adversary's strength. He was much surprised at the numbers of Henry's army, which now amounted to more than twenty five-thousand men.

* "It n'est pas croyable les gens que l'on met apres de moy pour me tuer. Mais Dieu me gardera—les ennemys me feront plus tost mal que peur." Lettres missives, Tom. iii. page 194. 14th May, 1590.

But the Duke's plan was instantly formed. To fight such a power in such a position was out of the question, and accordingly he at once entrenched himself in the marsh; declaring that in that post the King could never force him even to fire a pistol; but that he would thence take a town before his eyes, and completely relieve Paris, which was still kept in dire necessity by the possession which the Royalists had obtained of the course of the rivers. In vain Henry endeavored to draw his great antagonist into a battle; Parma displayed all the cool generalship of a Turenne, replying to those who urged him to fight, that the commands of the King of Spain were merely, to relieve Paris. He is reported to have answered a defiance from Henry himself, by saying, in somewhat haughty terms, that he would follow the course he himself judged expedient, to arrive at the ends for which he came. He then chose a misty morning, when the wind set from the Royalist camp towards Lagny, threw a bridge of boats across the river, and by a furious attack carried the place by storm, before Henry had time to afford it any sufficient support. The road to Paris was now opened, supplies poured into the town, and the opportunity of reducing the capital, was found to have passed away for the time.*

* The account given of these events by the King in his letter to the Duke of Montmorency, is precisely the same as that of the ordinary historians of the time, though he is evidently

The army of Henry was still superior to the united power of Mayenne and Parma, but the ingredients of which it was composed were of so discordant a nature that they could not be held together for any long period without some great and evident object, which might serve as a bond of union amongst them. As long as the hope of reducing Paris had existed, the tie had remained entire; but the moment the siege was raised, all the incongruous elements came into operation against each other, and Henry had speedily very good reasons to know, that if he did not retreat and divide his forces, they would disband and leave him.* Marshal Biron, and one or two other

bitterly mortified at his hopes of a battle being frustrated, by the superior generalship of the Duke of Parma. Henry had, on many occasions, shewn great skill and judgment, as well as valor and energy; but now, opposed to a commander of consummate military genius, he received a lesson, which he required and profited by. He endeavors, as far as possible, to make light of his disappointment, and to justify his measures, and states as his reason for withdrawing his troops from the suburbs of Paris, that he had received intelligence that the enemy had formed a plan for taking up a position at Chelles, and "gliding to Paris by the wood of Vincennes."

* The King does not attempt to conceal this fact in his correspondence, but states it plainly to the Duke of Montmorency, in a letter dated the 8th October, 1590, in which he bitterly complains, also, of the conduct of the Duke of Epernon, who had promised to join him with a large force, but had neglected to do so. "As to my Cousin the Duke of Epernon," he says, "I wish that the reason he sent you (for not join-

Roman Catholic officers, who had devoted themselves to him at first, without any consideration of religion, now generously maintained their attachment; but the whole of the party who had demanded conditions, formed a faction against the monarch in his own camp, magnified every difficulty and danger, alarmed and discouraged the soldiers, and spread every report unfavorable to the King. At the same time, as D'O, one of their leaders, was superintendent of finance, they had every opportunity of embarrassing the monarch, by keeping him in constant want of supplies. Nor did the superintendent fail, it would seem, to do all that was possible to irritate the applicants for money, returning haughty and insolent answers, and living in luxury himself, while the rest of the army were sorely in need. Even the table of the King was neglected; and after having been for two days absolutely deficient of food, Henry one morning at the hour of dinner, with good humored malice, proceeded direct to the quarters of D'O, and sat down to the well-spread board at which he found the superintendent and a large party of his faction assembled. Out of respect for the King's rank, D'O

ing Montmorency) had been valid, and that he had come to meet me as diligently as he wrote you he would do, my affairs would have been in a much better condition than they are; for three or four thousand more men would have enabled me to regain Paris, and also to fight—and I think, to win—a battle, whereas for want of them I have missed one and the other."

and his companions were obliged to rise; and we do not find that Henry paid him the same compliment that he offered to D'Aumont at Rosny.*

Under such circumstances, to force the Duke of Parma to battle was impossible, and Henry, taking the only course that was open to him, retreated to Creil on the Oise, after making an ineffectual effort to enter Paris by escalade.† Here the greater part of the army was detached in small bodies, some to reinforce the garrisons around Paris, some to recruit in the provinces from which they came. The Prince of Conti retired into Touraine, Montpensier into Normandy, Longueville into Picardy, and Nevers into Champagne, with a party of the Swiss; while Marshal D'Aumont was sent into Burgundy, and Biron remained with the King in his flying camp upon the Oise.

The plan of Henry was, to suffer the Duke of Parma to wear himself out, very sure that the necessities of the Low Countries, would prevent the Italian Prince from receiving any reinforcements, and in all

* All the authors of the time, but more especially Sully and Aubigné, represent the state of the King's army in the same terms.

† The escalade was actually attempted, though the narrative published by the King's order and addressed to the Governors of Provence denies the fact. A large body of infantry, taking advantage of a thick fog, approached close to the walls of Paris, and one ladder, at least, was reared; but a party of Jesuits, who had lingered on the walls, discovered the enterprise, and it was consequently frustrated.

probability, would soon require his return to Brussels. In either case, the King did not doubt that he would have an opportunity of harassing him in his retreat, and of recovering in some manner the glory lost by being compelled to decamp from before Paris. Nor was he disappointed in this expectation; for although the Dukes had been able to deliver the capital without fighting a battle, or losing a man, they were detained more than three weeks, and, it is said, sacrificed eight hundred men before the walls of Corbeil, a place which was hardly defensible, being commanded by two heights in the neighborhood. Le Grange the governor, however, aided by the courage and skill of Rigaud, maintained it till the whole wall was in ruins, and then defended the breach till it was forced by the Spanish army, who committed the most horrible excesses, slaughtering even infants in the cradle, and obliging the old men and women to leap from the bridge into the river, amidst the laughter of the soldiery.*

In the course of this siege, the jealousy which existed between the Duke of Parma and Mayenne manifested itself in various ways,† and the leader of the League, not only openly rejoiced at the slow progress of the Spanish arms, but did his best to prevent the general of the King of Spain, from holding any communication with the Council of Sixteen in Paris. Parma, although he wisely ab-

* Aubigné. L'Etoile. † Mem. de Villeroy. De Thou.

stained from making any attempt to lead his army to the capital, visited that great city incognito, and held several conferences with the chiefs of the faction, soon after the siege of Corbeil had commenced. It would seem that he received but little encouragement to prolong his stay in France, and it is probable that his keen mind at once perceived, that the ambitious designs of the court he served, were built upon no substantial foundation. For his own honor he would not retire till he had triumphed over the resistance of Corbeil; but the great diminution of his forces, both by war and disease, afforded a reasonable excuse for declining to undertake the siege of Melun; and not long after Corbeil had fallen, he began his march for the Low Countries, leaving a garrison in the place and providing for its defence. He halted for some time in the neighborhood of Chateau Thierry, upon the pretext of waiting for the aid promised by Mayenne, to enable him to effect his retreat in security; but there can be little doubt, that both during the siege which had just concluded, and during his halt at Chateau Thierry, the Viceroy of the Low Countries labored to form a Spanish faction, in the bosom of the League, in order at a future period, to obtain some substantial return, for the blood and money which Spain had expended, in promoting internal dissensions in France. He was destined to meet with a great mortification, however, before he returned to Brabant; for while Henry, whose infantry under

Biron, had already captured Clermont in Beauvoisis, prepared to attack him in his march, Givri and some other commanders assailed and took Corbeil, putting the whole garrison to the sword, in revenge for the cruelties they had exercised.

The moment that the Duke of Parma was known to be in retreat, Henry, who had in vain endeavored to succor Corbeil, followed the retiring force, attacked it at every halt, cut off its detachments, and, notwithstanding all the skill of the Duke, and the good discipline of his troops, brought the army to the brink of ruin. Night and day the King was in the saddle, and wherever a charge was to be made, there he was present in person; now in the rear, now in front of the enemy's force; he was sometimes seen attacking it in flank, sometimes opposing its passage at any favorable spot. Thus, in crossing the river Aine, the Duke found his adversary in advance of him, and a severe skirmish took place, in which Henry with a very small body, supported for a considerable time the whole efforts of the Spaniards. At one moment, the Baron de Biron was completely surrounded, unhorsed, and forced to defend himself on foot against the enemy's lances, but, by a gallant charge, the King delivered him from his perilous situation, and, satisfied with what he had achieved, and the capture of a great part of the enemy's baggage, suffered the Duke to pass the frontier, and returned

himself to resume, with undiminished ardor, the war against his rebellious subjects.

In the course of the siege of Paris, and during the events which had succeeded it, it is not to be denied that Henry committed several considerable errors. Amongst these may be reckoned that which was pointed out by Nevers; for the force which the King had at his command before the capital, together with the possession of so many towns upon the Marne, the Seine, and the Oise, would have enabled him, with little risk, to leave a sufficient body under the walls to keep up the blockade, while he himself marched to meet the Duke of Parma on the frontier, and to offer him battle with not unequal numbers. The lamentable habit of allowing affairs of gallantry to interfere with his more serious occupations, may have contributed to divert the King's attention, from the wisest and most honorable course he could have pursued. We find, indeed, that at this time he was not only a suitor of the Marquise de Guercheville,* but was also engaged

* This lady deserves more particular notice than I am disposed to bestow upon the various objects of Henry's transitory passions. Antoinette de Pons, Marquise de Guercheville, in right of her mother, was at this time widow of Henri, Count of La Roche Guyon. There can be little doubt that with his passion for this lady was connected the King's long and fatal delay in Normandy, after the battle of Ivry. But Madame de Guercheville firmly resisted the monarch's solicitations, and, while she rejected his love, preserved his friendship. She was the first lady

in seducing the beautiful Marie de Beauvilliers, daughter of the Count of St. Aignan, Abbess of Montmartre, whom he afterwards carried off to Senlis.

A fault indeed in the movements which succeeded the siege, namely, that of choosing the post of Chelles, instead of Claye, is universally attributed to the advice of Marshal Biron, and was undoubtedly committed in opposition to the King's opinion. It might also be an error on the part of the monarch, to permit the multitude, which devoured the provisions of the capital, to pass his lines, and thus to relieve the city; and by most authors it seems to be admitted, that a bold attempt to storm the town after he had obtained possession of the suburbs would have ensured its fall. One writer, I know not on what authority, hints that the King regretted the clemency he had shewn, when he found that success was wrested from his grasp; but though, doubtless, that clemency did actually save the capital, yet few who have learned to admire the character of Henry IV. will be found to wish he had not committed so noble an error.

Nearly the whole of November was employed by Henry in the pursuit of the Duke of Parma; but when once he had seen the Spanish army beyond the frontiers, he returned towards the banks of the

appointed to the household of the Queen Marie de Medicis: Henry saying, that he placed her in that position, as she was *really* a lady of honor.

Seine, and passed several days at St. Denis. He thence turned his steps towards Senlis, and remained at that town or in its neighborhood till the 30th of January, 1591, occupied with some great object, which he appears never to have carried into execution. His orders for the assembling of troops in the vicinity of Lagny are numerous and frequent. A multitude of letters, of which some were written in cypher, seem to have passed between him, the Duke of Nevers, and La Noue; but I find no indication of the nature of the monarch's design, or of the motives for abandoning an undertaking, which he speaks of in all his correspondence at this time, as one which he had much at heart. It is true that on the 10th of November preceding, while following the Duke of Parma, he had seen, for the first time, at the Chateau of Coeuvres, the beautiful Gabrielle d'Estrées; and his letters of the 2nd and 3rd of January, 1591,* prove that the pursuit of this new object of desire, occupied more

* These letters are addressed to M. de Neufville, who seems to have undertaken an unenviable and not very creditable task in the service of his royal master upon this occasion. It may be as well to remark in this place, first, that the ordinary accounts of all the King's movements for some time after the retreat of the Duke of Parma, and even many of the statements of Sully himself, are proved to be totally erroneous, by the dates of the monarch's own letters; and secondly, that the dates of many of the letters in the Memoirs of Nevers, and other collections, are not less erroneous than those statements.

of his thoughts and time than was consistent with his duties as a king and a general.

While the monarch remained in the neighborhood of Senlis, various parties of his troops, scattered over the country, carried on the war in desultory enterprises; and the greatest advantages gained were decidedly on the side of the King. Henry at the same time applied himself zealously, to rouse the adjacent countries to a sense of the ambitious designs of Philip; and more extensive schemes of policy seem now to have presented themselves to his mind. Some short time before, the King had sent for Cheverny, who had, for a considerable period, held the important office of Chancellor under Henry III., but had been disgraced just before the death of the Duke of Guise. To him the monarch now restored the seals, with one of those gracious speeches, which so much won upon all who approached him, and by the light of Cheverny's experience, the King now walked in all affairs of state. A better organization was given to the household; the business of the government was put in a more regular and dignified train; and Henry, who had hitherto lived rather as a leader of horse than a monarch, began to display some of the splendor of royalty.

Money, however, and men were still wanting, for any great effort; and, as neither could be obtained without much difficulty, ambassadors were sent to England, Holland, and Germany, setting forth in

strong terms the King's view of the invasion of the French territories by the Duke of Parma. These ambassadors were followed by Turenne, with extraordinary powers; and in all the countries visited by that nobleman, he found a decided hostility towards Spain, which afforded the fairest opening for the negotiations he was directed to carry on. I shall have occasion, hereafter, to notice the result of his exertions; but, in the first place, it may be necessary to follow the military operations which succeeded.

The only remarkable enterprise on the part of the League, which occurred in the month of January, 1591, was an attempt to surprise St. Denis by the Chevalier d'Aumale. The ditch of the town was passed in the night; ladders were raised, and a small party, entering undiscovered, opened the gates to the rest. De Vic, the governor, however, roused by the noise, sprang upon horseback, and gathering together a few soldiers, induced the Chevalier, by a stratagem, to believe that the troops of the garrison were at once attacking him, in front and flank. A panic spread amongst the assailants, who fled in confusion, leaving a number of killed and wounded in the streets; and one of those who fell was the turbulent and libidinous Chevalier himself. The circumstances of his death have been so differently stated by contemporaries, that I will not venture to give any minute account of that event.*

* The Chevalier Cheverny says, that, having entered the

Not long after, Henry, having received supplies of money from England, determined to make a new attempt upon the capital, and, having disguised some soldiers in the garb of countrymen, sent them, on the 19th January, 1591, with a number of sacks of flour towards the Porte St. Honoré, while he approached the end of the suburb with a small force, and the rest of his army awaited the result at Montmartre. The orders given to the pretended peasants were, to seize upon the gate as soon as they had entered; but M. de Belin, who was now Governor of Paris, had received intimation of a design against that quarter of the city, and had caused the gate to be secured by a mound of earth. The first party of assailants having been informed of this fact as they approached the walls, retired to communicate the news to their companions, and a retreat was effected without loss. The whole scheme, had been discovered to the Governor by some persons who had seen the soldiers of the King, and the attempt afforded a pretext for Mendoza, the Spanish Ambassador, to urge, and for the Council of Sixteen to accept, a garrison of four thousand Spanish troops for Paris, and five hundred for the defence of Meaux. The former entered the capital on the 11th February, and the

place, he fancied it was completely in his power, and was surprised and killed by De Vic, while amusing himself with a woman of the town at the inn of the Royal Sword.

Spanish politicians imagined that this was the first step to obtaining possession of the metropolis and of France.

The enterprise against Paris having failed, Cheverny besought the King to turn his efforts towards Chartres, which was the chief place of his own government; and Henry, agreeing to the proposal, sent orders to Biron immediately to invest that city, while he led his army from Senlis to aid in the siege. The King sat down before Chartres on the 9th February; but the defence was long and obstinate, the garrison consisting of three thousand regular troops, besides the citizens. It would seem that the first assault was made on the strongest side of the city, near the gate des Espars. Henry here lost a number of his best men, and even thought of abandoning the siege; but Cheverny strongly dissuaded him, and the point of attack being changed, Chatillon, who was an excellent mathematician and engineer, undertook to throw a bridge of a new construction over the moat, which he executed with great skill. The wall being breached, the ditch rendered of no service, and the Royalists ready to storm, the garrison capitulated upon reasonable terms.

Before this time, Monsieur d'Estrées, the father of the beautiful Gabrielle, had endeavored to cover the shame of his daughter by her nominal marriage with Monsieur de Liancourt; but the

King had caused her to be brought openly to his camp before Chartres,* and we learn from Sully, that the violence of his unfortunate passion for his mistress led him to forget his duties as a monarch. Sully, however, who was not at the court at the time, has indubitably made a mistake in regard to the cause of Henry's absence from that which he terms "the siege of Corbie," for it is clearly shown by the King's own letters, that after entering Chartres and placing garrisons in several neighboring towns, he hastened with part of his army to the relief of Chateau Thierry, which was besieged by the Duke of Mayenne, and that the capture of Corbie was effected, not by siege, but by surprise, four months before the fall of Chartres.†

The siege of Noyon was long and difficult; and from its situation on the frontier of the Low Countries, no exertion was spared on the part of the League to oblige Henry to abandon the attempt. One or two small parties threw themselves into the town before it was invested, and after the siege commenced, three bodies of troops under Tremblecourt, Tavannes, and the Duke d'Aumale, approached for the purpose of introducing fresh forces into the place, but were on each occasion met by the Royalists, and routed with severe loss. As

* Hist. des Amours de Henri IV. par Me. la Princesse de Conti.

† Aubigné. Mem. de Nevers, tom. 2, p. 210. Lettres Missives, tom, iii. page 311.

the garrison of Noyon offered a vigorous resistance, time was given for Mayenne to make a great effort for its deliverance, which he first attempted to effect by a demonstration upon Mantes, hoping that the danger of that important town might call the King from before Noyon, and if not, that its capture might compensate for the loss of the latter. His enterprise upon Mantes, however, was frustrated; and having called to his aid M. de Rosne, who had been joined in Champagne by the Prince of Ascoli, with some troops from the Low Countries, he marched to La Fere, at the head of seven thousand men. The union of all the partizans of the League in Picardy soon raised the amount of his forces to twelve thousand horse and foot, while the army of Henry before Noyon did not number more than nine thousand. But the King called in all the detachments which were within summons, and prepared, if the Duke advanced beyond Ham, to meet and give him battle. Mayenne, with his usual inactivity, suffered several days to pass without any movement of importance; and in the middle of August the Governor of Noyon sent out to parley, when the King agreed to allow the garrison two days to enable the Duke to raise the siege by a battle if he thought fit. Mayenne made no effort, however, for that purpose, and the town was accordingly surrendered, with all its stores and ammunition.*

* I find not the least reason to suppose that the sole motive of Henry for attacking Noyon was, as has been asserted by the libellists

During these operations, foreign auxiliaries were marching from all quarters to support one or other of the contending parties in France, and negotiations were going on throughout Europe for larger reinforcements. Sancy levied troops for the King in Switzerland, and carried on the war against the Duke of Savoye, in the neighboring provinces. De Maisse, the Royal ambassador at Venice, obtained some aid from the Venetians. Elizabeth of England raised four thousand five hundred men for the service of the French monarch, and sent Essex to join him in Picardy; and the German Princes, at the solicitation of Turenne, brought into the field six thousand horse and ten thousand foot, who assembled on the Rhine, near Hocheim, on the 11th August.

Nor were the agents of the faction less active

of his own time, and by the commentators upon l'Etoile, to confer the government upon the father of the fair Gabrielle. When there are quite sufficient reasons for the conduct of a great man, it is unjust to seek for inducements in his weaknesses. Noyon was, in those times, a very important fortress, one of the principal places of refuge for the forces of the League in Picardy; and the possession of that town, La Fere, and several other small forts in the neighborhood, not only proved of great inconvenience to the Royalists of the Province, but facilitated the frequent introduction of foreign troops into France from the Low Countries. We find, also, from the King's correspondence, that, as far back as the spring of the preceding year, the inhabitants of St. Quentin had repeatedly applied to their monarch, to deliver them from the scourge of the garrisons of the League in their neighborhood.

in exertions to obtain assistance. In February, the Council of the League wrote to the new Pope, Gregory XIV. beseeching his support in men and money. The Spanish ministers at Rome seconded their petition, and after manifold intrigues, such as are usual at the Pontifical Court, it was determined to employ the sums laid up in the castle of St. Angelo, for the purpose of putting an army on foot, and the whole of Lombardy was kept in a state of agitation by the levy of men for the Pope and the King of Spain. The army thus raised for the service of the League was placed under the command of the nephew of the Pope, newly created Duke of Montemarciano, and, passing the Alps in three bodies, marched into Franche Comté, where it arrived early in August, Lesdiguieres not having a sufficient force to oppose its advance. At the same time, the Comte de Brissac was sent by Mayenne to the Duke of Parma to solicit fresh aid ; but the reply of that Prince was cold ; and all that Brissac could obtain for the time, was, a sum of two hundred thousand florins for the relief of the pressing necessities of the League. As it was found that nothing would induce Parma again to enter France, unless some strong town were delivered to him as a place of retreat, it was determined by the League, to surrender to Spain the fortress of La Fere, at the junction of the Oise and the Serre. The Marquis de Megnelai, who commanded therein for the faction, was unwilling to put a body of foreigners in possession of one of

the strong places of the kingdom ; but his resistance was removed by assassination ; and La Fere was given up to Spain.

Although I have only judged it necessary to trace the operations of the King and the leader of the League, it must be remembered, that at the same time, the contest between the Royalists and the rebels was kept up by a partizan warfare in almost every province of France. These hostilities proved on the whole favorable to the cause of Henry in many respects, even when his friends were defeated ; for the success of the various generals of the League, only tended to increase the divisions which existed in the faction, to expose the ambitious designs of its leaders, to deprive it of the pretext of religion, and to weary the people of the kingdom, of disorder and insurrection. The Duke of Mercœur, after having received a considerable reinforcement from Spain, followed the example of Mayenne, and gave up one of the French ports to the Spaniards. He then undertook several successful operations in Brittany, but it became so evident that he was striving alone for his own aggrandizement, that a complete separation of interests took place, between himself and Mayenne. The young Duke of Guise, too, made his escape from prison, and appeared as a new competitor for the crown ; and the Cardinal of Bourbon, son of Louis I. Prince of Condé, endeavored to form another party, for the purpose of elevating himself to the throne. Henry remarked all these

intrigues with no small satisfaction, and we are assured by the president Henault, that he was by no means displeased to hear of the escape of the young Duke of Guise, feeling sure, that it would bring new confusion into a party already full of discordant elements.

Amongst Henry's adherents, indeed, there was only one cause of disunion, namely, difference of religion; but about this time the publication of various letters and treatises, even by his own supporters, in which the question of their allegiance to a heretic monarch, was treated very lightly; and as one of great doubt, proved that at any moment of pressing difficulty, his adherence to the Protestant faith might become most perilous to the state. That it produced innumerable evils to the Royal cause I have already shown; and throughout the course of the war it deprived him of all real power, over men who had many conscientious doubts as to the propriety of serving him at all. In the course of this year, too, Henry lost, by death, two invaluable champions of the Protestant faith. Chatillon, the son of the famous Admiral de Coligni, died on his own estates shortly after the capture of Chartres, having previously gained a reputation, scarcely surpassed by that of his father; and the celebrated La Noue, who had seldom gone into battle, without receiving some severe wound, was at length killed in an attack upon Lamballe, crowning a life of unstained honor, and high military renown, by a death of glory in the service of his King.

Various important successes, however, in different parts of France, compensated, in some degree, for these two disasters. In the early part of the year, a number of places in Poitou were taken by the Prince de Conti, and the army of the Count de La Guerche was entirely routed and cut to pieces. Grenoble was taken by Lesdiguieres, and the same officer joined with La Valette, attacked, and completely defeated the army of Savoy under Martinengue, which victory was followed in the month of September, by the total overthrow of another Savoyard army, in which two thousand five hundred of the enemy were killed, and a great number made prisoners. The Duke of Epernon, too, began to act on the part of the King, and the first fruit of his exertions was the defeat of the Governor of Montreuil, who, with his son, was taken prisoner; but in an attack upon Pierrefons, the Duke was severely wounded, and his forces in consequence obliged to raise the siege.

I may further notice, before I proceed to detail the military events which followed, that in order to satisfy his Catholic supporters, Henry continued to protest, by public declarations, that he was most anxious for instruction on points of religion, that he was ready to submit at once to the decision of a free council, and that he would never suffer any change to be introduced in France to the detriment of the Roman Catholic religion, or to the injury of its professors. At the same time, however, he

took care that the Parliament of Tours should declare the bulls launched against him by Gregory XIV. to be null, abusive, seditious, damnable, full of impiety and imposture, contrary to the decrees of councils, and to the rights, franchises, and liberties, of the Gallican church, and that an order should be issued for burning them by the hands of the public hangman.

After the fall of Noyon, Henry despatched Biron, with his army, to assist Humieres in the renewed siege of Pierrefons, and, after a short period of repose, proceeded thither himself. Under the walls of that city he was joined shortly after by the Earl of Essex, and a train, the splendor of which seems to have astonished the harassed and impoverished nobility of France. The Earl, in his approach, was preceded by six pages dressed in orange velvet embroidered with gold, as well as twelve mace bearers and six trumpeters, in clothing equally rich, while he himself appeared covered with jewels, so that his own dress, and the harness of his horse, were computed to be worth sixty thousand crowns of gold. On his arrival, Henry left Biron to continue the siege, and returned with the Earl to Noyon, where he entertained him splendidly for several days. Intelligence there reached him, that the German army, which had been collected on the banks of the Rhine, was on the march, and he determined to go in person to meet it on its advance. Pierrefons not having yet fallen, Henry took the

somewhat rash resolution of leaving Biron and his forces to carry on the siege of that place, while he himself, with a very small escort, crossed a country filled with the enemy's troops, in order to meet the auxiliaries in the neighborhood of Sedan. Before he set out he was joined by the Duke of Montpensier, with another small force, which raised the body that accompanied him to nearly one thousand men. He now visited the Duke of Nevers in the vicinity of Haumont, and after having spent a day with him, proceeded to Sedan, which place had been more than once attacked, and its territories ravaged by the troops of Lorraine, since the death of the young Duke of Bouillon at Geneva. The inheritance of that Prince had fallen to his sister, and the hand of the heiress had been an object of contention between many aspirants. Henry, however, had determined to bestow her, and the principality which formed her dower, upon the Viscount de Turenne, with the threefold purpose of rewarding his services, satisfying his ambition, and placing a general in Sedan, willing and capable of holding in check the house of Lorraine. This marriage was agreed upon during the King's visit to Mademoiselle de Bouillon, and, at the same time, Henry raised the Viscount to the rank of Marshal, so that henceforth he is known in history as the Marshal de Bouillon. On the 29th of September, the King proceeded to the plains of Vandy, where he found the German army under Prince Christian of Anhalt, drawn up in

battle array to the number of sixteen thousand men. They received him with loud acclamations, and with a rolling fire, in keeping up which, without the slightest irregularity, they showed the greatest skill. After having inspected them, and dined with their commander, the King led his united force towards Verdun, in which place were the Dukes of Lorraine, Mayenne, and Montemarciano, with the Lorrainaise and Italian troops, which were marching to the assistance of the League. Advancing at the head of a corps of light cavalry, Henry presented himself within sight of the walls of Verdun, chasing in a party of Italian horse; but the princes of the League were not to be brought to a battle, and after another visit to Sedan, the King pursued his way to Vervins, which was now taken for the third time in that year. The King's foreign army was then separated into four divisions, and after having quelled a mutiny amongst the German infantry, the different commanders led their troops by various roads to join Marshal Biron in Normandy, to which province that officer had directed his march, after having failed in the attack upon Pierrefons, in order to unite his forces with the English under Essex, and attack the city of Rouen. The siege of Rouen had been determined upon by Henry and Biron some time before; and, notwithstanding every precaution to prevent a report of the King's intention getting abroad, a rumor to that effect had early reached the ears of Mayenne, and induced him to take measures for the security

of the place. The command of the garrison was entrusted to Villars, formerly Governor of Havre de Grace, and every effort was made by that officer to prepare for a vigorous resistance.

Biron arrived in Normandy some time before the King, but refrained from approaching the city destined to be ultimately attacked, and employed himself in capturing Gournay and Caudebec, while Henry met the German forces, in Champagne. On the 11th of November, however, the King having approached sufficiently near to support the operations against the place, Biron invested the city with the united troops of England and France.

The first days of the siege passed in cutting off, as far as possible, the streams of water which turned the mills, and in lodging the troops as near the city as was judged expedient; but the garrison were prepared for the former proceeding, and by a vigorous sally, taught the Royalists that they had approached too rashly. A curious defiance was then sent to Villars by the Earl of Essex, who wrote him word, after some more friendly correspondence, that if he would meet him on horseback, or on foot, in armor, or in his doublet, he would maintain against him man to man, twenty to twenty, or sixty to sixty, that the cause of the King was better than that of the League, Essex a braver man than Villars, and his mistress more beautiful than that of his opponent. To this chival-

rous bravado, Villars replied, that his duty prevented him for the time from accepting the challenge, but that as soon as Mayenne arrived, he would not fail. In the meantime he gave him the lie upon all the three points in which Essex pretended to be superior, but added a jesting assurance, that in regard to the last of the three, he did not much trouble himself.

On the twenty-fourth of November, Henry himself arrived at Darnetal with the rest of his forces, and, according to the account of Aubigné, the united army of Royalists now amounted to thirty-five thousand men. The long and minute details of a siege, conducted on principles so different from those which a better knowledge of such operations has induced military men of the present day to adopt, would be anything but interesting or instructive to the reader, and I shall therefore content myself with noticing only those events which materially affected the progress of the Royal arms, and some of those in which the King was personally engaged. Immediately after the arrival of the French monarch, he sent a herald to summon the garrison to surrender and recognize him as King of France. But the city was defended by an officer who had long sought to raise himself from an inferior station into such a position as would render his services of importance to either party, and having embarked in the cause of the League, he felt himself bound by interest, as well as honor, to show that the opinion entertained of his resolu-

tion and military skill was not ill founded. In the next place, a number of the inhabitants, especially the Mayor, had so deeply committed themselves by the violence of their proceedings against the King, that they entertained but little hope of mercy, notwithstanding the known clemency of Henri Quatre. The reply, therefore, made to the herald, was bold, and even insolent, and an oath was subsequently taken by the principal citizens to maintain their attachment to the League.

The siege then proceeded, the works being pushed forward rapidly; and Henry, it is to be remarked, not only performed the part of general, but took his turn in defending the trenches, still adhering to his gallant, but perhaps unwise, habit of acting more as a soldier than a commander. He was thus exposed to continual danger, led many of the storming parties which were directed against the various outworks, and was constantly one of the foremost in repelling the sallies of the enemy. On one occasion, while he was examining the progress of the works on the heights, with Aubigné and an English gentleman named Roger Williams, a sudden call to arms and a fire of musketry was heard from the plain below, towards Darnetal, and the King, turning in that direction, perceived that Villars had issued forth at the head of three hundred horse and a hundred and eighty arquebusiers, and was marching along the small river which there wanders through the plain. The only force in

arms to oppose this sally of the enemy was a body of eighty English soldiers, with Biron, his son, and sixteen of the French guard. Henry, carried away by his ardor, immediately spurred forward, descended the hill, which was even difficult for men on foot, and being cut off from the scene of action by the river, pushed his horse over the top of a wear, which seemed to afford hardly any footing. The good charger, however, carried the King across; but neither Aubigné nor Williams—though the historian admits that the latter was as brave a man as any upon earth—ventured to follow; and Henry putting himself at the head of the little party of Royalists, showed as much coolness as he had before shown daring, restrained the rash courage of the English, who were approaching to charge the superior force of the League, and finally drove back the enemy to their walls.

Day after day Villars entertained the assailants with sallies and skirmishes; and during five weeks but little progress was made in the siege. Early in the year 1592, a new reinforcement arrived to support the assailants, and a nation which had not yet acted any separate part in the great drama of European policy, appeared upon the scene as the ally of the French King. A Dutch fleet presented itself at the mouth of Seine, disembarked a considerable body of well-disciplined and veteran troops, and several of the ships sailing up the river, exchanged shots with the forts of Rouen.

The delay which had taken place on the part of the League, ere any vigorous effort was made for the deliverance of Rouen, is not to be attributed to the general habit of procrastination which has been observed in Mayenne. Insurmountable obstacles had been found to impede all his operations, and the intrigues of his own party, the constant struggle which he was forced to maintain against the ambitious designs of Philip of Spain, the exhausted state of his own finances, and the delays of the Duke of Parma, had deprived him of all power of succoring the besieged city. The party of the Sixteen in Paris were now in a state of unconcealed hostility to the Duke and his pseudo Parliament. The King of Spain fomented these divisions through his ministers in Paris; and the young Duke of Guise was fixed upon by the Parisian leaders as the future husband of the Infanta Isabella, and the founder of a new dynasty in France. These views were satisfactory to, and doubtless inspired by, Philip; but at the same time that monarch knew well, that if he either drove Mayenne to despair, by refusing him his due share of authority, or suffered him to fall before the sword of Henry, his submission to his sovereign would probably be the consequence, and on his submission would follow the total destruction of the faction. Intrigues and negotiations of a subtle and disgraceful character followed, in which Philip labored to keep Mayenne dependant on himself without depressing him too far, and Mayenne to obtain great

assistance from Spain, and guarantees of future support and aggrandizement, without conceding the objects which the Spanish monarch desired. Some of the despatches of Mayenne and the Governor of the Low Countries, were intercepted and delivered to the King; and Henry had every reason to believe, that although armies were promised, and supplies of money sent to the Lieutenant-General of the League, it would be long ere his arrangements with his exacting ally could be completed. Mayenne, however, was obliged to yield the point of the advancement of the Infanta to the throne of France, and the cession of a number of towns to Spain; but by the aid of the President Jeannin, he contrived to surround these engagements with so many conditions, that they became, as he well knew they would, perfectly nugatory.

On joining, at Verdun, the Italian forces sent to his aid by the Pope, the Duke had found the troops enfeebled by sickness, and the leaders in open hostility with each other. The death of Gregory XIV. soon after followed, and Mayenne's expectations from Rome were diminished to a shadow. Paris, straitened for provisions by the line of Royalist fortresses which surrounded it, pillaged by the faction of the Sixteen, and moved by the secret partizans of the King, was in a state of the most complete disorder, incapable of supplying men or money, and daily tending towards submission to the King. The dread entertained by a large part of its population for the virulent and

daring men who oppressed it, afforded the principal means of retaining it in union with the League; and yet those very men had become the personal enemies of the Duke, and the pensioners of Spain; and an act, equally brutal and iniquitous, which they committed on the sixteenth of November, at length compelled Mayenne to put an end to their rule, and thus deliver the Parisians from the apprehensions which had so long proved a barrier to the progress of more loyal feelings. An officer named Brigard had been accused by the Sixteen of holding communications with the King, had been tried by the Parliament, and declared innocent. The courts of law and the faction had long been opposed, and the acquittal of Brigard roused the Sixteen to a pitch of fury, which nothing could satisfy but blood. By the most shameless artifices, the signatures of a number of the councillors were obtained to a blank paper, which was filled up with a decree of condemnation against three of the most respectable magistrates, who continued to hold their sittings in Paris. The President Barnabé Brisson, and two of his brethren, named Archer and Tardif, were seized on the morning of the sixteenth, carried prisoners to the lesser Chatelet, and hanged in that prison without form of trial. Their bodies were then exposed on gibbets in the Place de Greve; but the people, instead of being gratified with this spectacle, expressed their undisguised abhorrence of the deed, and the corpses were secretly removed.

No sooner did Mayenne hear of this daring act, and the measures against himself with which the Sixteen proposed to follow up their crime, than setting out from Laon at the head of a strong body of soldiers, he entered Paris, and after having in vain endeavored to induce the Parliament to take cognizance of the offence, he hanged, by his own authority, four of the murderers, and gave up the houses of five others, who escaped, to be pillaged. He then proceeded to abolish the Council of Sixteen, to forbid, under pain of death, all secret assemblies, and, in fact, to pass the strongest condemnation upon the very means by which he had arrived at power. After having created four new Magistrates, he set out once more to gather forces from all sources open to him, in order to compel Henry to raise the siege of Rouen; but he left Paris freed from the tyranny which alone had kept it so long subject to the League.

The necessity of giving succor to the besieged city had already become so pressing, that the Duke of Parma had at length put his troops in motion for that purpose, and his junction with the Duke of Mayenne and the Papal General soon after took place, on the frontiers of Picardy. Some long discussions ensued regarding the pretensions of the King of Spain, which delayed the march of the united army; but at length it began to advance by slow and careful marches, halting each day several hours before nightfall. The Duke of Parma himself marked out the camp at every resting place, and,

displaying his usual calm prudence, led his forces to the banks of the Somme, with as many precautions as if the enemy had been hovering around him.

In the meantime no progress had been made in the siege; a plot within the walls for delivering the city to Henry had been discovered and frustrated by Villars; rumors were afloat in the camp, that Biron, disappointed by the refusal of the King to give him the yet unconquered town, was employing all those means which were likely unnecessarily to protract the siege; and the coldness of the Roman Catholic nobility had degenerated into actual disaffection towards the Protestant monarch. So evidently, indeed, had they shown their unwillingness to secure his throne till he should have adopted their own faith, that, in a conversation with Sully, Henry declared he saw himself menaced with the desertion of all his Papist supporters, "which will bring with it," he said, "the ruin of the state, and of the family of Bourbon; for if they once come to a rupture with me, they will never choose for their King a Prince of that house."

It being at length announced that Parma was advancing somewhat more rapidly, Henry determined to leave Biron, with all the infantry and artillery, to carry on the siege, while he himself led his cavalry, to the number of between seven and eight thousand, of which at least one half consisted of French gentlemen, to harass the Dukes in their approach. The united forces, opposed to him

amounted to twenty-five thousand foot, and six thousand horse, and though some jealousy existed between the Generals, yet it was not of a kind to affect their operations. In three days after leaving Rouen, Henry with his advance guard found himself in the neighborhood of the enemy; and by a vigorous attack upon the quarters of the Duke of Guise, who was at Bures, somewhat thrown forward, he gave Parma notice of his presence. Though he had left behind him his main body of cavalry, under the Duke of Nevers, the King did not fail to obtain a signal success. Guise, and the advance guard of the League, were put to flight, and, had Nevers marched on as rapidly as the King commanded, to the post of Bully, the whole of that division of the enemy would have been cut to pieces. Nevers, however, by his habitual slowness, suffered the opportunity to escape; and Parma, for the future, was more upon his guard against so enterprising an adversary as the King of France. For several days Henry hovered round the advancing forces of the League, till at length, in the neighborhood of Aumale, he learned that Parma was marching in battle array direct towards him, to oblige him to retire and attack him in his retreat. The King, who knew that a difficult country for the manœuvres of horse was behind him, determined to occupy the enemy with a small force, while the main body of his cavalry moved upon Blangy and Neufchatel; and with four hundred chosen men-at-arms, and five

hundred horse arquebusiers, he advanced towards the enemy's army. I shall give the account of what followed nearly in the words of Sully, who was present. The King ascended the heights of Aumale with his nine hundred men, and marched two leagues without perceiving any thing, until the weather, which had been very gloomy, becoming clear, he saw Givri returning for the second time, who gave him full information regarding all that he wished to know of the enemy's army. It was now so near, that one heard the drums and trumpets, but Henry was resolved to see it himself, and he consequently made an exact recognizance, when he found that Parma was marching towards him with the greater body of his forces in close array. Judging that he had still too many soldiers with him, he ordered eight hundred to pass the high road, and enter the small town of Aumale, commanding three hundred horse to keep upon the edge of the hill, to aid him in case of need, and the five hundred arquebusiers to garnish the hedges and walls at the entrance of the town. On his own part he not only waited the enemy with his hundred men, but even went to meet them. "We looked at each other," says Sully, "astonished to the last degree at a plan in which we saw nothing but rashness, that seemed destined to consign the King to certain death. No one daring to speak, and not being able to hold my tongue, I was in the end deputed in the name of all to represent to the King the danger to which he

exposed himself, and to endeavor to make him change his resolution, which I executed, softening the terms as much as possible." Henry replied by charging his followers with fear, but Sully repeated his protestations of devotion, and only besought the King to retire, giving them what orders he thought fit. Henry replied that he did not doubt their fidelity in the least, but added coldly, "Believe me, I am not so rash as you may imagine. I am as careful of my skin as another, and I will retire at the proper moment, so that no evil shall occur."

The Duke of Parma, seeing before him such a small body of horse, imagined that its appearance was but a stratagem to draw him into a general battle, and that the whole of the Royal army was concealed behind the town in the valley. He therefore would not suffer the corps of the King to be attacked for some time, till at length, being assured by his parties that there was no force in front, he ordered his cavalry to advance, and in a moment Henry was assailed so furiously, and from so many quarters, that his troop was driven back in confusion into the valley, where the arquebusiers ought to have been posted. Either by mistake, or seeking a more advantageous position, they had disobeyed the King's commands, retiring much farther than he expected; and consequently, when Henry, who had previously given his companions orders not to advance at the word, exclaimed in a loud voice, "Charge," no men showed themselves

but his own little troop. The enemy, fearing an ambuscade, halted for a moment; but instead of a fire of musketry, they were only assailed by fifty or sixty pistol shots, which had little effect. The Spanish horse, finding none to oppose them but the handful in front, charged again immediately. Henry's squadron was broken; and the King himself, with his friends, forced to fight hand to hand against a multitude. A number were killed at the very first onset, but Henry now showed, as usual, as much military skill in the moment of peril, as he had shown rash intrepidity before. Rallying his men with the utmost coolness, he put himself in the rear, while they defiled over the bridge of Aumale; and fighting hand to hand with the foremost of the enemy, he kept them at bay till all who were left alive of his troop had passed the bridge, and then crossed himself the last. At that very moment he received the ball of a carbine in his back, just below the cuirass, but he still continued to maintain the combat till he reached the place where the rest of his horse were posted. They instantly advanced to support him, and the appearance of this fresh body, as well as the news that the King was present in person, confirmed Parma in the belief that the Royal army could not be far distant. Nothing would shake this conviction, and recalling his cavalry, he suffered Henry to retreat to Neufchatel. On arriving at that town, the King was obliged immediately to retire

to bed; but the surgeon soon found that the wound which had spread consternation amongst the monarch's friends, was by no means dangerous. Henry, however, was disabled for some time from directing the military affairs of his army, though we find from Sully, that even before the injury he had received was healed, he was again at the head of his forces, harassing the Duke of Parma on his march. He was sensible, nevertheless, of the fault he had committed, and always spoke of it as the error of Aumale.

To the surprise of the King, and all who accompanied him, the Duke of Parma, after having taken Neufchatel, in which Givri had been left to secure the retreat of the King, and advanced a few leagues towards Rouen, made a retrograde movement towards the banks of the Somme, after throwing a reinforcement into the besieged city.

To account for this apparently strange proceeding, we must turn once more to the operations of Marshal Biron, which, it must be acknowledged, were conducted with neither skill nor vigor. He had continued pertinaciously to attack the fort of Mount St. Catherine, against the opinion of some of the best officers in the army, and though he attempted the sap and mine, means were always found ready to frustrate his efforts. Not long after Henry and the cavalry had marched to meet the army of the League, Villars, perceiving the negligence which reigned in the

besieging force, determined upon making a vigorous sally; and having, during the night, introduced near three thousand men into Fort St. Catherine, he led them forth towards seven o'clock in the morning on the side of Darnetal. Troops were prepared to cover the retreat of the party, and no precautions having been taken in the royal camp, the Leaguers found little difficulty in driving the soldiers in the trenches before them, killing many, spreading consternation through the army, and in the end taking five cannon, and spiking two others, in what were called the quarters of the King. During two hours the besieged force met with no check, and finally retired, after an obstinate engagement with the troops which Biron led against them, with the loss of only forty men, after having slaughtered five hundred of the enemy, taken a number of prisoners, and carried off a quantity of provisions and ammunition. Biron himself was wounded, and Villars, returning in triumph to Rouen, sent despatches to Mayenne, informing him of his success, and assuring the Generals of the League, that he could maintain himself for many months in the place, if they would afford him some reinforcements. The Duke of Parma, on receiving this intelligence, called a council of war, a proceeding frequently detrimental, and rarely useful, to a general of skill and experience. His own proposal was to march forward at once, and attack the Royalists before they recovered from their alarm and surprise; but Mayenne and the French officers in the camp—

probably unwilling that the Duke should have any such hold upon a town of so much importance as the capital of Normandy—urged the danger of attacking in its entrenchments a powerful force, having always a secure retreat in the Pont de L'Arche. They represented also to the Duke of Parma, that if the city could hold out but a short time longer, Henry's army would be inevitably diminished nearly to one half, by the return to their homes of the immense number of volunteers which it contained. The governor of the Low Countries yielded to these representations, and retired, as I have said, to the banks of the Somme, while Henry, after having paid some attention to the wound he had received, returned to the siege of Rouen, and carried it on with vigor. Two forts were now built upon the river, which cut off all the supplies of the town;* a portion of the wall was in breach; and the situation of Villars became extremely dangerous. But that which Mayenne had foreseen had taken place; a great part of the Royal cavalry had withdrawn, and the Dutch troops had also been recalled to the assistance of the Protestant party in their own land. In the beginning of March, however, the Governor of Rouen, found that he could not much longer hold out the place against the army of the King, and intelligence of the fact having been sent to Parma and Mayenne, those generals immediately hastened to repass the

* L'Etoile.

Somme, and march towards the besieged town. No delay was now made by the Spanish General, and in six days his immediate approach was announced to the King. Henry now perceived that, with his diminished forces, it would be vain to carry on the operations any farther; and, mortified with the result of his efforts, somewhat disgusted with the conduct of Biron, and anxious for the future, he prepared to raise the siege, and carry on the war against the League in the open field.

The characters of Henry and the Duke of Parma now seemed changed; the one displayed a degree of caution, prudence, and generalship, which he had never before evinced; the other pursued a rash and unthinking course, strongly opposed to all the principles upon which he had acted through life. Retiring upon the Pont de L'Arche, Henry summoned all his nobility to rejoin him, and the expectation of a battle soon brought the warlike gentlemen of France around him. The Duke of Parma, skilfully avoided an engagement; but after having entered Rouen in triumph, he was induced to advance against Caudebec in the Pays de Caux, thus placing himself in a most dangerous and difficult position, nearly surrounded by the Seine, the Bresle, and the sea; the only road for retreat that was open, was by the small town of Yvetot, a short distance from Caudebec; and instantly perceiving the great mistake his adversary had committed, Henry called in all his detachments, advanced by

forced marches to the Pays de Caux, and took post in the neighborhood of Yvetot, while the Dutch fleet guarded the mouth of the Seine, and to all appearance rendered the passage of that river impossible. Caudebec was taken by the Duke of Parma; but not till he himself had received a wound in the arm, which was never completely healed; and on the 28th of April, he was taught the great error into which he had fallen, by the approach of the King's army, and the measures which Henry immediately took for fortifying himself in such a position, that it was impossible to force a battle upon him. Every passage which seemed to afford the slightest possibility of escape for his adversary, was occupied and strengthened by the King, notwithstanding the utmost efforts to frustrate his design; daily skirmishes took place, of a fierce and sanguinary kind, for the different posts upon which the French monarch seized, but at length the King saw all his operations successful, and the army of the League shut in between the river, the sea, and a force consisting of seventeen thousand foot, and more than seven thousand horse, with a country already nearly exhausted of provisions. The situation of the Duke of Parma seemed hopeless, and Henry, doubtless, expected soon to see the army of the League lay down its arms, and his crown secured without striking another blow. But the genius, resolution, and skill of the Italian Prince, saved himself and his allies from the perilous position in which they

were placed. To cross the river was the only means of retreat; and although Mayenne, and the most experienced officers in the army, pronounced it impracticable, Parma resolved to attempt this operation. Villars received orders to prepare in Rouen a number of strongly constructed rafts, and to collect all the boats which could be found in the vicinity. At the same time, batteries were erected along the banks to keep off the Dutch fleet; and on the morning of the sixteenth of May, the Duke of Parma drew off his troops from the neighborhood of Yvetot to Caudebec, under cover of a skirmish of cavalry. Henry was puzzled by this movement, and advanced his camp towards the latter town, taking care to fortify himself at every change of position, in order to force the enemy to surrender without a battle. The ground in the neighborhood of Caudebec, however, was of such a nature as to conceal the operations of the enemy, and while Parma occupied the King with continual skirmishes, the boats and rafts were brought down with the ebbing tide from Rouen, and two strong forts were raised on either side of the river. During the night of the 20th of May, which was misty and obscure, the artillery and baggage, with a large part of the Spanish army, were transported to the other side. On the morning of the 21st, Henry's practised eye perceived a change in the appearance of the enemy's camp, and he immediately sent the Baron de Biron, at the head of a small body of horse,

to reconnoitre. In a few minutes Biron returned at a full gallop, bringing intelligence that the Duke was passing the river. Without the loss of a moment, the King hurried down towards the banks, at the head of his cavalry, but he found only a small body of between two and three thousand men, on the right bank of the Seine, so strongly defended by the fort which had been erected, that it was impossible to attack them without great loss. Before his artillery could be conveyed to the ground, so as to command the passage of the river, or the Dutch fleet, could be brought up from Quillebœuf, the rear guard of the Spanish army had been ferried over, and the boats which had been sent down from Rouen set on fire, and turned adrift.

To have pursued the retreating forces of the League, would now, perhaps, have been in vain, with harassed troops, and mutinous leaders, who treated the King's proposal to that effect with contempt; and Henry suffered the enemy to withdraw unmolested. Mayenne halted at Rouen with the French troops, and the Duke of Parma, marching up the Seine, passed that river at the bridge of Charenton, and proceeded quietly towards the Low Countries.

Henry was afterwards known to declare that he looked upon the retreat of the Duke of Parma as more glorious to that general than if he had won two battles, adding, that the object of a great commander was not so much to fight and to conquer, as to execute that which he had undertaken without

risking an engagement. The Duke, on his part, justly refused the same praise to the daring conduct of the King at Aumale, replying to those who pointed out that he himself had lost the opportunity of taking or slaying the King, that he thought he had to do with a general, and not a captain of horse; and when asked if the manner in which Henry had conducted his retreat, was not worthy of admiration, he answered, that it certainly was very fine, but that, for his part, he never placed himself in a situation to be forced to retire. It is hardly necessary to say that this speech must have been uttered before he besieged Caudebec.

BOOK XIII.

"No labyrinth," says Sully, "was ever equal to that complication of interests which divided the different parts composing the army of the King," after the retreat of the Duke of Parma. The common object of the Roman Catholics was to drive Henry to abjure the Protestant religion by threatening to abandon him, and join their fellow Papists in electing a new king; but each individual amongst them had some particular end in view to which his efforts were directed. The Huguenots, seeing Henry waver in his resolution, took offence at every thing, and fancied they were about to be sacrificed. The Swiss and the Germans, whenever a new movement was proposed, demanded their arrears of pay. The English required permission to retire as soon as a march into the heart of France was mentioned. Another party, with the young Cardinal of Bourbon at its head, complicated the whole confused proceedings by their bigotry, and by opening, from time to time, negotiations apart with Mayenne, the result of which could not be foreseen by any one.

The only resource of the King was that to which he had before applied, when he had found that the union of so many discordant parts in one force was

likely to generate dissensions which might prove ruinous to his cause; and he consequently detached a large portion of his army to watch the proceedings of the Duke of Parma, while one part retired into quarters at Caen, and others received permission to return to their homes. Henry himself disappears for a few days from the scene of action, and there is no doubt that his time, so valuable to himself and country, was bestowed upon the beautiful Gabrielle on the way to Champagne, whither Biron was marching upon the steps of the Duke of Parma. Mayenne, in the meantime, occupied himself at Rouen,* in restoring that city to a defensible state, in carrying on some negotiations with Royalist deputies at Darnetal, and in making preparations for a siege, by which he hoped to open the navigation of the Seine. The negotiations were conducted principally by Villeroy and du Plessis Mornay, but were rendered fruitless at the time, it would appear, by the indiscretion of du Mornay, who suffered the secret to transpire, and armed all the interested parties to resist the conclusion of a peace.† The siege which Mayenne meditated, proved only disgraceful to the arms of the League. Quillebœuf, against which it was directed, defended itself gallantly for nearly three weeks, and then saw the enemy retire from

* By some authors he is said to have accompanied the Duke of Parma some way on his march, and then returned to Rouen, but others affirm that he halted there.

† Mems. de Villeroy.

before its walls. Pont au de Mer was obtained by treachery; and on the other hand, Epernay, in Champagne, was taken by the Duke of Parma.

The latter place was of too much importance to be left in the hands of the enemy without an effort to recover it, and Biron, immediately advancing, laid siege to the town on the 26th of July, while Henry remained at Compiègne in the arms of his mistress. On the second day of the siege, while reconnoitering the place, a cannon ball from the walls carried off the Marshal's head, and the King, deploring the loss of the great General, although his councils had as often proved detrimental as beneficial, hastened in person to supply his place; and after having defeated a body of troops, which had attempted to throw itself into Epernay, and cut off a portion of the garrison in a sally, he forced the town to surrender on the ninth of August.

In the meanwhile, Henry had been obliged to renew his promise of seeking instruction in the Roman Catholic doctrines within six months; and in order to give some assurance to the Catholics of his party, he agreed to send the Cardinal de Gondi, Archbishop of Paris, and the Marquis of Pisani, to Rome, to treat with the Pope regarding his reconciliation with the Church. Mayenne, on his part, agreed to send at the same time, the Bishop of Lisieux and M. des Portes, but whether to oppose the monarch's ambassadors, to aid them in their efforts, or merely to counteract the intrigues of the Court of Spain, may be doubted.

Certain it is, however, that the Spanish party conceived that his intentions were becoming more favorable to the King, for the most furious opposition was offered to the proposed embassy, and every art was employed to make Mayenne forget the jealousy which he entertained of the Duke of Parma, and heartily embrace the cause of Philip. Negotiations, the course of which would be tedious to the reader, still took place between the more moderate Leaguers and the King, and day by day, in the city of Paris, the Royalist party gained ground. All the wisest men in France learned to regret, as all the good men had long regretted, the state of anarchy which reigned in every part of the kingdom, but more especially in Paris. No sooner had the Duke of Mayenne struck so severe a blow at the faction of the Sixteen, as the murder of Brisson and his companions had forced him to inflict, than the moderate party of the League began to show themselves openly, and were soon absorbed into the body of the Royalists, with whom they now made common cause. To all who would not be hurried into the excesses of the Sixteen, the name of Politics had been given by their adversaries, and they had been accused of favoring the King whenever they showed the slightest disposition to oppose cool reason to the fury of faction. Many, from religious prejudices, had been sincerely attached to the League; but from being charged with loyalty as a crime, it was an easy step to embrace

it as a virtue, when it became no longer dangerous to do so; and early in the year 1592, meetings of the Politics were held, in which consultations took place regarding the necessity of overthrowing the opposite faction, preventing the introduction of Spanish troops into French cities, diminishing the influence of the Ambassador of Spain and his creature the Cardinal Legate of Placentia, and maintaining the authority of law and of the Parliament, in the city. These meetings were first held at the house of M. d'Aubray, formerly Prevôt des Marchands, and afterwards in the Abbey of St. Genevieve, the Abbot of which monastery was attached to the Royal cause. Here, day after day, assembled in secret, the most wealthy and respectable citizens of Paris; but the month of September had commenced before they ventured to acknowledge amongst themselves the rights of the King, or to suggest the propriety of treating with him. A more open avowal of loyal sentiments then took place; a regular plan of operations was formed, the organization of the party effected, houses were appointed in different parts of the capital for secret conferences, and it was determined to elect new officers for the different municipal posts which had previously been engrossed by the Sixteen.

These arrangements, however, could not be kept so secret, that a part of the operations of the Politics did not transpire; and under the plea of maintaining harmony, conferences with their leaders were proposed by the chiefs of the faction which still

retained the name of the Sixteen, and were not refused. They were held in the presence of the Governor, but the Politics skilfully maintained the appearance of attachment to the League and to the Duke of Mayenne, and their adversaries only exposed their own untractable violence, without obtaining any concession.

The want of supplies which existed in Paris, in consequence of the principal towns in the neighborhood being still in the hands of the Royalists, greatly favored the views of the Politics, disgusted the citizens with the League, and made them anxious for a cessation of hostilities. An assembly was held on the 26th October, to consider the state of the capital, and a proposal was openly made to treat with the King, for the purpose of obtaining free traffic with the neighboring country; it being reported that Henry intended for the future to refuse all passports for provisions entering Paris. Under the system of passes which had been hitherto in existence, the price of all the necessaries of life had been kept enormously high in Paris, by the duties levied in the towns surrounding the metropolis. The governors and citizens of those places had become rich, the Parisians, poor; and those who issued forth to purchase what they needed, had been taught to draw a most unfavorable comparison between the situation of the Royalists and the Leaguers. Had negotiations for such a treaty as was proposed been once commenced, there was no possi-

bility of foreseeing what results they might not produce; and Mayenne took alarm at the suggestion. He was now aware of all the designs of Spain; he saw clearly that he was for ever excluded from any chance of obtaining the crown, which had seemed once within his reach; he perceived that he could draw no assurances from Philip for his personal security and aggrandizement; he felt that if that monarch succeeded in raising the Infanta to the throne of France, he must always be looked upon with jealousy and suspicion; and he was consequently not at all indisposed to negotiate with Henry on his own account. But it seemed necessary to do so cautiously, with arms in his hands, in order to wring as much from the monarch as possible; and his plan was still to use the forces of Spain and the League for the purpose of driving Henry to comply with his demands. He had, therefore, the task before him of restraining the Politics, of opposing the Royalists, of keeping down the Sixteen, of covertly thwarting the Spaniards, of conciliating the Church, and of treating with Henry. For the first of these purposes he hastened to Paris, and in a general assembly at the Hotel de Ville, insisted that the proposal to negotiate with the King for a free traffic should be withdrawn, adding a significant hint, that if persisted in, he should regard the authors of it as ill affected to the League, and enemies of the Roman Catholic religion.

At the instigation of the Sixteen, the faculty of Theology presented a memorial to the Duke, re-

quiring, amongst other things, that it should be forbidden even to speak of peace with the King of Navarre, that the States General should be immediately convoked in Paris for the election of a King, and that all men should be obliged to swear to maintain the Union before the Legate. Some of the demands now made, Mayenne evaded, some he treated with contempt; but he solemnly promised to call the States General within a month, and from that moment labored assiduously to insure the return of such deputies as were devoted to his interests; but in this he was opposed by the fury of the faction and the gold of Spain; and the fate of France was for a time held in suspense by the meeting of the body now summoned.

Though, as we have seen, the cause of Henry had gained ground greatly in the capital since the beginning of the year 1592, it had much declined in his own Court and camp. After the surrender of Epernay a total want of means to keep a large body of forces on foot, had compelled him to discharge almost all the foreign troops in his service, with but a small part of the pay which had been promised them. The Duke of Epernon had resigned the office of Admiral, receiving in exchange the government of Provence; and the vacant post had been bestowed upon the Baron de Biron. With a flying camp under the immediate command of the latter, Henry advanced towards Paris, after the siege of Epernay, and in order farther to straiten that city, built a fort upon an island in the

Marne near Gournay, by which, together with Corbeil above the capital, and the towns he possessed on the Seine below, he obtained once more a complete command of the rivers. Finding however, that Mayenne, whose military strength had declined to a very low point, was once more urging the Duke of Parma to return with the promised army to carry on the war in France, and that the Italian Prince, after long negotiations, concerning the election of the Infanta, was preparing to accede to the demands of his ally, Henry hastened towards the end of the year to the neighborhood of Corbie, and summoned all his supporters to meet him, with the intention of opposing the advance of the Spanish forces on the frontier.

But the Duke of Parma was no more destined to lead armies to the field. On the 11th of October, he had returned to Brussels from Spa, whither he had gone for the benefit of his health; and he instantly applied himself with his usual diligence to the levy of soldiers for another expedition into France. The energies of his mind for some weeks sustained his corporeal frame against the ravages of a mortal disease; and he not only went through the usual business of the government, but rode out on horseback daily, so that his friends and attendants judged his illness less serious than it really was. Philip refused him the permission to retire to Italy, which he demanded, and urged him to hasten into France for the purpose of supporting at the head of an army the intrigues of his agents

with the League. In order to show prompt obedience to these commands, the Duke proceeded to Arras to meet the States and carry on his preparations; but on the third of December, in dismounting from his horse, a change came over his appearance, and he expressed to one of his officers his conviction that death was approaching. He transacted business, however, during the evening, and signed some despatches only a few minutes before his death. His immediate successor in the Government was Count Peter Ernest, of Mansveldt, who had ruled in the Low Countries during Parma's absence in France; and that nobleman's son was put at the head of the forces destined to assist the League. But the Duke's death delayed for some time the march of the army; and it did not enter the French territory till the commencement of 1593. Henry, delivered from his anxiety by the death of the Duke, retired from Corbie, and, after dispersing the greatest part of his army, returned to Senlis, and thence to St. Denis. He then removed to Chartres in order to visit Touraine, and meet his sister, at Saumur, as soon as the events which were taking place in Paris would permit him to be far absent from the capital.

In the meantime, the Cardinal de Gondi had met with so cold a reception at Rome, as to induce a belief that Clement VIII, who had now succeeded to the tiara, was in no degree inclined to encourage the conversion of the King of France. The Legate during November, December, and January poured

forth bulls and excommunications against Henry and his supporters, and on the 9th November, he put forth a declaration, importing that the Pope was ready to confirm the election of whatever Catholic Prince the States about to assemble should think fit to elect as King. But on the 18th of the same month, the Parliament of Chalons published an edict against the Legate and his proceedings, as well as against the proposed meeting of the States General, declaring that assembly to have been illegally called, and forbidding all persons to take any part therein. At the same time, the intrigues of all the fractions of the League continued, and the agents of the different aspirants to the throne busied themselves in all parts of France to influence the election of deputies. Mayenne, however, holding the chief power, secured the majority of the returns, and after several delays, to suit his convenience, the spurious States General met in the great hall of the Louvre, on the 26th of January, 1593.

Though there can be no doubt that the assembly of the States was illegal, though more than even the ordinary degree of corruption had been practised in the elections, though four-fifths of the nobility of France, nearly half of the clergy, and a large body of the Tiers état were unrepresented, though several of the bishops present, and many of the deputies, were notorious for their profligacy, and openly guilty of adultery, incest, and every kind of vice, and though the whole constitution of the body was so full of ridicule, that it was treated with

laughter and derision even by the populace, yet the meeting of persons, calling themselves the States General, and the object which was proposed, placed Henry in the most difficult position in which he had yet found himself. I will not repeat what has been already said of the parties, by which the King had been hitherto supported; but that monarch evidently saw, that if a King were once elected by the assembly now sitting in Paris, with the consent and approbation of the Pope, two consequences would inevitably follow; first, that all the Princes of Europe who adhered to the doctrines of Rome, would recognize the creature of the League as legitimate sovereign of France; and secondly, that the great body of the Catholics would abandon the Prince, whom they looked upon as a heretic. His embarrassment was increased by the interception of a large mass of correspondence between the leaders of the League, the court of Spain, and the Politics, which fell into the hands of Sully, and showed not only a design to overthrow his throne, but to take his life; and it became necessary immediately to choose some course of action, that might obviate the adoption of an extreme measure, which all the parties to it would look upon as irrevocable. The only circumstance favorable to the views of the King, was the variety of interests which were brought into action against each other in the States of the League; and, in order to delay a decision which might be fatal to the peace of France, to encourage the honest but mistaken persons nominally arrayed against him, to spread

farther dissensions amongst the ambitious aspirants to authority, and to open a way for his own secret partizans to frustrate the designs of his enemies, Henry determined to propose a conference between deputies from the Catholics of his own party, and deputies from the mock States of Paris. This resolution was executed on the 28th of the month; and a trumpet was sent to the gates of the capital, bearing the offer, in the name of the Catholic Princes and officers of the Crown, to the Duke of Mayenne and the deputies from the provinces. The paper was not signed by the King, and almost at the same time, Henry published a solemn protest against the assembly of the States.

The very name of a conference acted as a firebrand amongst the various parties in Paris. The Spanish faction and the Legate sought to send back the proposal without a reply, and even to punish the messenger; but Mayenne referred the question to the States, and after a month's fiery dispute, the offer was accepted. Much time however was lost in fixing the place of meeting, during which nothing was done to advance the views of the Spaniards by the States.

While these deliberations were taking place, Henry set out from Chartres to Saumur,* in order to meet his sister, having left Orleans

* This journey has been justly but severely censured by all contemporaries, for though it was important to give relief and support to the towns on the Loire, yet the events taking place in Paris and the neighborhood, were far more worthy of immediate and constant attention.

blockaded by a body of the Royal troops. He was accompanied by Biron and a small army, which, joined with the troops upon the Loire, relieved the inhabitants of Tours from the presence of some neighbors attached to the League; but when Henry had escorted the Princess to the capital of Touraine, he received intelligence which induced him to hasten back to the neighborhood of Paris. No sooner had the King set out for Saumur, than Mayenne left the capital to meet the Spanish troops under Count Charles of Mansveldt, and having joined the small force which accompanied him to that of his ally, he at once laid siege to Noyon, which, after a resistance of three weeks, was obliged to capitulate on the 30th of March, before Henry could arrive at St. Denis.* At that town, tidings of the fall of the besieged city reached the King; but the loss of the attacking force had been enormous.

After innumerable difficulties, the village of Surene was chosen for the place of conference between the Leaguers and the Catholic royalists; and on the part of the pretended States General, eleven persons were deputed, having at their head the Archbishop of Lyons, while for the King appeared only eight, headed by the Archbishop of

* Cayet says he had arrived at St. Denis, and was levying troops to raise the siege, when the news of the surrender of Noyon reached him; but a reply of the Catholic Royalists to the message of the Leaguers renders it probable that Henry was still in Touraine, or on his journey back, on the 29th of March.

Bourges. The conference was principally carried on between the two Archbishops, and much subtlety was displayed on the part of the League; but the clear and masterly exposition made by the Archbishop of Bourges, of the evils which afflicted France from its internal dissensions, of the duty of subjects to their King, and of the probable effects of the conversion of Henry, overpowered the sophistry of his adversary, which was so gross, that even his own party did not feel disposed to give him their full support. The conference at Surene continued till the 17th of May, 1593, when the King, having declared his intention to seek immediate instruction on those points of faith, in regard to which he was doubtful, the Archbishop of Bourges offered a truce of two or three months, to give time for the King's conversion. The offer was not at once accepted, although it was highly necessary to the safety of Paris, and to the very existence of the League, that such a suspension of hostilities should take place; for the army of Count Charles of Mansveldt, after the capture of Noyon, which had lost three thousand men, fell directly into a state of complete disorganization, and the Italian troops disbanded themselves, and found their way back to their own land.

From St. Denis, Henry retired to Mantes, with a mind agitated by many conflicting emotions. He had lately gained an insight into the designs of the third party, as it was called, which showed him that

without making a sacrifice of the religion in which he had been educated, he might be a victorious General, but never King of France, and that slaughter and desolation must continue to reign through one of the finest countries in the world. He had long feared that such would be the result; and Cayet* assures us, from his personal knowledge, that the monarch had lost no opportunity of satisfying himself in regard to the points of essential difference between the Protestant and Roman Catholic faith. He had asked explanations of many learned and pious men, and had especially consulted a number of Catholic priests, with a very natural desire of finding arguments in favor of those doctrines, the adoption of which would remove so many of the difficulties that surrounded him. He now consulted the Protestants themselves; the advice of Sully was asked; the state of the King's affairs was considered between the monarch and his friend; the dangers on either side were weighed; and Sully himself adduced the strongest arguments in favor of the King's conversion. He showed him that it was the only means of saving the State; that though he might offend the Protestants, there was no chance of their being driven to insurrection; and he held out to him the prospect, if by his change of religion he obtained secure possession of the throne, of quieting for ever

* Cayet's authority is somewhat suspicious upon matters of religion.

the religious feuds which had desolated the country, of insuring to all his subjects the religious liberty for which he had so long fought, and of restoring peace and prosperity to France.

The only difficulty that remained was the great one of conscience; but that difficulty was, perhaps, not so great as it has been represented. Henry had never been a zealous Protestant; that he was a sincere and religious man, is not to be doubted; but he was not one to enter deeply into the nicety of controversial questions; he had been frequently reproached by the Huguenot ministers for his indifference on such points, and had through life expressed his willingness to be convinced of the Roman Catholic doctrines by argument, or to submit to the decision of a free council. We are assured by one who knew him well from boyhood to death, that long before the present period he had been converted on the point of transubstantiation,* and consequently the greatest impediment was already removed; but still he was resolved to be satisfied on all the other doctrinal differences which presented any great obstacle to his mind; "for," says the Protestant Duke of Sully, writing long after the King's death, "as uprightness and sincerity formed the depth of his heart, as they did of his words, I am persuaded that nothing would have been capable of making him embrace a religion which he internally despised, or of which he even doubted:" an important testimony from a witness above suspicion.

* Cayet.

On the 18th of May, Henry wrote letters to several of the prelates and priests of France, requiring a conference with them on the subject of religion, and appointing the 15th of July for that purpose; but he would not protract from day to day, as the Leaguers of Paris desired, the suspension of arms which had been agreed upon during the conferences of Surene, and after having yielded more than once in the hope of some favorable result, he took the field, and again attacked the town of Dreux, which was captured after a resistance of fifteen days. The Gray Tower, an immense mass of masonry, and the citadel, still held out but the former was mined and destroyed by Sully, and the castle was forced to surrender. Some severity was shown to a part of the inhabitants, and more, perhaps, might have been excused, as the garrison, we are assured, fired upon the King, his sister, and a large party of ladies, during a truce, wounding several of the attendants.

The loss of Dreux greatly afflicted the Parisians; and Mayenne was severely blamed for suffering the King to obtain a success which he had no power to prevent; but many other events had taken place, during the conferences at Surene, of more importance than the capture of a small town. The suspension of arms, which had been granted for the security of the deputies, had filled the Parisians with joy, taught them the benefits of peace, and made them look forward to a restoration of tranquil-

lity with expectations which it might be dangerous to disappoint. The plans of Spain had developed themselves; the Duke of Feria had accompanied Mayenne from the frontiers of the Low Countries to Paris, as plenipotentiary from Philip; and the Cardinal of Placentia had labored, both zealously and indiscreetly, to forward the views of the Spanish ministers. Mayenne, however, still commanded a majority in the States, though he had become an object of hatred and scorn to the populace, and was daily losing his influence with the nobles of the League. Having rendered himself dependent upon Spain, he could not venture to oppose openly the designs of the Spanish monarch; but he did not fail to throw every impediment in his way; and it was not till the 20th of May that envoys of the Catholic King found a fitting opportunity to propose openly the elevation of the Infanta to the throne of France. It had long been evident to Mayenne and all the most clear-sighted of his party, that this proposal was about to be made; but it shocked inexpressibly many of the most ardent Leaguers, who had imagined the Spanish monarch sincere in his professions of disinterested zeal. Their indignation, however, afforded the best security that, in its present bold and unmitigated form, the demand of the Duke of Feria would be rejected by the States, and to them Mayenne agreed to refer it. The consideration of the question was delayed for eight days, and then, on the part of Spain,

John Baptist Taxis, supported by Mendoza, in a long and florid harangue, demanded the crown for the Infanta; but Taxis, perceiving that the assembly was totally opposed to such a breach of the Salic law, offered to confer the hand of the Infanta upon the Arch-duke Ernest, in order to remove the objection entertained by the French to the domination of a woman. No reply was made at the time; and the Ambassador saw that the new proposal was not less unpalatable than the former. Negotiations for a truce succeeded,- ardently desired by the multitude, and necessary to the Duke of Mayenne, but opposed strongly by the clergy, the Legate, and the Spanish faction. These contests delayed the further consideration of the proposals of Philip till the 22nd June, when the Duke of Feria went down to the Louvre with a new modification of the terms, offering to give the whole support of Spain to the League, if they agreed to accept the Infanta on condition of her marriage with a Frenchman, to be chosen by his Sovereign, from any princely family including the house of Lorraine. This artful stroke produced all the effect intended; and if, says Villeroy, they had been as cunning as they believed themselves to be, the game was won; for the States offered to proceed at once to the election of the Infanta, conjointly with the Prince to be named: the declaration and publication to be suspended till the marriage was accomplished, and Ambassadors to be sent to Spain with

the Prince chosen by the King, to declare the election as soon as the nuptials had taken place. The Spaniards, however, affected to consider such precautions as insulting to their sovereign, and the golden opportunity passed away. Innumerable intrigues followed; the Duke of Mayenne endeavored to force his second son upon the Spanish Ambassadors as the Prince to be selected for the husband of the Infanta. The Duke of Nemours put in his claim; the Duke of Lorraine sought to advance his son; and a large party supported the young Duke of Guise. But in the midst of this scene of contention, a blow was struck by a body which had hitherto abstained from interfering, which came like a thunderbolt upon the Spanish party, and dissipated all their vain imaginations. The Parliament, by a decree of the 28th of June, protested solemnly against all proceedings which might transfer the crown of France to a foreigner, or infringe the fundamental laws of the kingdom; and declared, all which had been done, or might be done, in such a course, null and invalid.

The Duke of Mayenne was immediately suspected of suggesting this act; but we learn from Villeroy that it took place without his knowledge and consent, and was merely the result of the attachment of the great body of the law to the acknowledged institutions of the country. It is probable that Mayenne, with the assistance of Spain, would have overleaped this barrier, had the

nomination of Philip fallen upon his son; but on the 14th of July, that monarch's ministers announced, in an assembly of the leaders of the League, that he had selected the Duke of Guise as the husband of his daughter; and Mayenne, with bitter indignation in his heart, but smooth words upon his lips, applied himself from that moment to frustrate the views of the Spanish court. His situation became not only difficult but even perilous; he saw himself deserted in a moment by all the nobility but three;* the rest hastened to pay their court to Guise; and the only person, beyond the family of Mayenne, who seemed to feel little satisfaction in the choice, was the young Duke himself. Various preliminaries, however, were to be arranged, and of these Mayenne took advantage for his own purposes. The great majority of the deputies to the States were still at his command, and, on the 15th of July, the assembly declared that they would not proceed to the election of the Infanta, till the Duke of Mayenne was assured of payment for the immense expenses he had been obliged to incur, and of recompense for the services he had rendered.† The Spaniards and their adherents murmured and remonstrated, but Mayenne, sure of his power in the States, treated all their proposals coldly; and, although they demanded that no treaty for a truce, should be entered into with the King of Navarre, until they

* De Thou. † Journal de Henri IV.

had time to consult their own court, and, moreover, instigated the Legate to threaten that he would retire from Paris, if a suspension of hostilities was granted, the Duke calmly replied that he must act in that matter as the necessities of the case might require.

It was plain to all men, that Henry was now about to join the Roman Catholic communion, and had Mayenne chosen this moment to seek a reconciliation with the King, he might have obtained for himself and his friends every advantage which he could reasonably desire, and would have preserved at least the appearance of having acted throughout from a sincere, though mistaken, zeal for religion. He still clung, however, to the hope of retaining power as the leader of a party, even when all chance of accomplishing his more ambitious schemes had passed away; and he thus lost the opportunity of preserving both his reputation and influence. Indeed, agitated by various passions, embarrassed by a thousand difficulties, disappointed in his expectations, frustrated by the very instruments which he had employed for the purposes of his ambition, he seems to have become bewildered in the labyrinth which he himself had aided to raise, and, met by perils on every side, to have been driven first to one course, and then to another, by the obstacles on either hand, neglectng the only path to safety which was open before him. After having thwarted the views of the Spanish

party on the most essential point, he cast himself into their hands in the vain hope, that when the objects for which they had struggled were lost to them for ever, they would give him their support; after having set at nought the authority of the Legate, he joined with that prelate in the endeavor to prevent or render nugatory, the reconciliation of the King with the Church; and after all hope of maintaining the League was at an end, he thought fit to enter into a solemn engagement, confirmed by oath, with the Spaniards and Cardinal Legate, never to abandon the Union or recognize the King, whether he renounced the Protestant faith or not.

In the meantime, Henry, while at Mantes, had been engaged in listening to frequent conferences regarding religion. He gave his attention to Papists and to Protestants alike, and from the latter he obtained an admission, that "God is not less honored in the Roman Church than in that of the Reformation," and that salvation might be obtained in one as well as in the other. This assurance appears to have had a great effect upon the King's mind, and he argued, that if such was the belief of the Protestants, while the Roman Catholics declared that no man could be saved out of their own communion, security was only to be found with the latter. "Prudence requires," he said, addressing a Protestant minister, "that I should be of the religion of the Catholics, and not of yours, because

in being of theirs, I am saved, both according to them and according to you, and being of yours, I am only saved according to you, but not according to them." It has been supposed, indeed, and with great probability, that de Mornay and others, who took part in these conferences, did not exert themselves with any degree of zeal to retain the King in the Protestant faith, and seeing that his conversion was the only means of restoring peace to France, suffered their opponents to gain advantages in arguments which might have been prevented. At the same time, the Archbishop of Bourges, a man of considerable talents and piety, with a number of other Roman Catholic prelates, brought the whole force of their eloquence to the work of conversion, and although zealous Protestants have not been able to conceive that Henry was sincerely convinced, it is scarcely possible, when the question is considered calmly, to suppose that he was not. The whole arts, arguments, and eloquence of Rome were employed to bring conviction to his mind; the opinions of the Fathers of the church, whose works he had never read, were cited upon points which he had little opportunity of investigating; the example of multitudes whom he knew to be men of wisdom, learning and piety, was held up before him; and on the other hand, nothing was opposed to these inducements, but the cold and feeble reasoning of persons probably unwilling to be successful. At length, having removed from Mantes to St. Denis, Henry

summoned to assist him a number of the clergy of Paris, amongst whom were several of the most ardent preachers of the League; and to this application they acceded, notwithstanding the furious opposition of the Spaniards and the Legate, the latter of whom threatened them with the severest censures of the Church, and with the loss of all their benefices. The curate of St. Eustacia, however, boldly replied, that neither his conscience nor the canons of the Church, permitted him to refuse his assistance to a heretic willing to be converted, and if the Legate did his duty, he would take part in the good work himself. His companions and himself, accordingly, set out for St. Denis, and, aided by the Archbishop of Bourges, and three other bishops, labored during Friday and Saturday, the 23rd and 24th of July, to instruct the King in all doctrines of the Roman Catholic faith. The Cardinal de Bourbon made one great effort to prevent the King from receiving absolution from the hands of any one but the Pope; and the Legate published a prohibition, by which the prelates and ecclesiastics of France, were forbidden to receive Henry into the bosom of the Church. But the wise and good men by whom he was now surrounded, were not to be deterred by such menaces from restoring peace to France, and gaining a great convert to their own faith; and the King, having declared himself perfectly satisfied, prepared to make his abjuration on Sunday the 25th of July.

At eight o'clock in the morning of that day, Henry, dressed in white satin, with a black mantle and hat, proceeded to the great church of St. Denis, supported by the princes of royal blood, the officers of the Crown, and a large number of the nobility. He was preceded by the Swiss, the Scotch, and the French guard: the houses were decorated, the streets were strewed with flowers, and, notwithstanding a strict prohibition published the day before in Paris, forbidding the people to be present at the ceremony, an immense multitude lined the way on either side, greeting him with repeated cries of "Long live the King." At the entrance of the church, seated in a chair of white damask, embroidered with the arms of France and Navarre, appeared the Archbishop of Bourges, supported by the Cardinal de Bourbon and a number of bishops, with the monks of St. Denis, bearing the cross, the evangelists, and the holy water. On arriving at the great doorway of the church, he was asked by the Archbishop who he was, to which Henry replied, "I am the King." The Archbishop then demanded, "What do you seek?"

"I seek," answered Henry, "to be received into the bosom of the Apostolical and Roman Catholic Church."

"Do you really desire it?" inquired the Archbishop.

Henry answered that he did; and kneeling before

the prelate, he pronounced the following words: — "I protestand swear, before the face of the Almighty, to live and die in the Roman Catholic religion, to protect and defend it against all men; at the peril of my blood and my life, renouncing all heresies contrary thereunto."* The Archbishop then gave him his consecrated ring to kiss, and afterwards absolution and benediction. The monarch was next conducted into the choir, and repeated his profession of faith, and his oath, on his knees before the altar, having kissed which, he was led to the confessional behind, where he made confession to the Archbishop while Te Deum was sung; and then, having been conducted to a desk covered with crimson velvet, embroidered with gold fleurs-de-lis, high mass was celebrated before him, and thus terminated the ceremony of his abjuration. The same evening he heard vespers at St. Denis, and then proceeded to Montmartre, to render thanks in the church of that place.

It would be tedious and vain to recapitulate all that has been said regarding the conversion of the King; some have asserted that Henry treated the subject with levity, saying that Paris was well worth a mass; others have declared that Gabrielle d'Estrées

* This is not the form of abjuration given by Sully, but as it is to be found both in L'Etoile and Cayet, there can be no doubt that it was that which the King pronounced before the Archbishop. The more extended form which Sully mentions was probably given in writing, signed by the King's own hand.

had a great share in the conversion of Henry; and Aubigné, with his usual malevolence, has done all that he could, to throw an air of ridicule and insincerity over the whole proceeding. But almost all those who knew Henry well, have declared that his conversion was sincere, and appeal to the whole course of his after life as a proof of the assertion. It is probable that the monarch, always indifferent to forms and ceremonies, thought the change in a religious point of view, of much less importance than it appeared to the eyes of the more zealous of either religion; but the respect which he paid throughout his whole life, to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church, even in points where his vices and weaknesses were concerned, gives strong proof of his sincerity. We know that he even separated himself for a time from her he loved best, when about to perform some extraordinary act of devotion; and indeed, he seems not only to have embraced the doctrines, but also some of the superstitions, of the Roman Church. A careful examination of all his acts throughout the rest of his life, can hardly fail to impress the mind with a belief that his conversion was sincere; and the character of the monarch was so strongly opposed to fraud and deceit of any kind, that there is every reason to conclude, in the remarkable words of Sully, that "a prince who had never cheated men, was very far removed from the design of cheating God."

BOOK XIV.

The exhausted state of both parties required some time for repose. To Mayenne, a suspension of arms was necessary, in order to frame new plans of resistance, and to carry on intrigues both with the Court of Spain in order to obtain support, and with the various fractions of the League, to restore union amongst its discordant parts. At the same time, the humane policy of the King led him to permit his rebellious subjects to taste the blessings of peace, as the best means of disgusting them with the war, in which they had so wildly and unreasonably engaged.

The conversion of Henry was thus almost immediately followed by a truce of three months, granted on the 31st of July; and the result which the Archbishop of Bourges had foretold in the conferences at Surêne, as one of the certain consequences of the abjuration of the King, very soon appeared. A number of Protestant noblemen and gentlemen followed his example, and ere many years had passed, most of the distinguished Huguenots had conformed to the religion of the state. There were a few eminent exceptions, indeed, which we may have to notice hereafter; but it would seem unnecessary to particularize all the instances in which

the Protestant nobility reconciled themselves with the Church of Rome.

In the meanwhile, Mayenne, the Legate, and the Spaniards, struggled in vain against the difficulties into which they were thrown by the King's conversion. They bound themselves to mutual assistance by oaths so rash and imprudent, that Mayenne found it necessary to conceal them, even from his councillors Jeannin and Villeroy; they instigated the preachers to declaim from the pulpits against Henry and those who had assisted at his abjuration; they induced the States, by a pitiful stratagem, to publish the edicts of the Council of Trent in an illegal and informal manner;* and they persuaded the deputies to take a new oath of union, by which they hoped to maintain a party in the state. But the oaths of all were soon broken; the fiery oratory of Boucher, and other zealots, had no effect upon the cold ears of the people; and the great body of the clergy of France protested against the publication of the edicts of the Council of Trent, as contrary to the privileges of the Gallican church. The King, however, without loss of time, despatched messengers to the Pope, making spiritual submission to the Holy See, and

* This was effected after the Duke of Mayenne had formally prorogued the States till September. The Legate did not enter, we are assured, till after the Duke had pronounced the prorogation; but then the "ordonnance" for the reception of the decrees of the council was read before him, and he thanked the deputies as for an act of the States.

promising to live and die in the Catholic faith. He afterwards sent a more formal ambassador in the person of the Duke of Nevers; but the Cardinal Legate had taken instant measures to frustrate the views of the King, by despatching Montorio, one of his attendants, to prejudice the mind of the Pontiff, and persuade him that the conversion of Henry was but feigned. Clement VIII., a weak and bigoted priest, was easily led to any act of unseemly violence, and he twice sent to forbid Nevers to approach the Vatican as the envoy of Henry of Navarre. He also warned him to enter Rome, even as Ludovic of Gonzaga, with as few attendants as possible, and showed every inclination to reject the application of Henry for absolution from the anathema launched against him, on any conditions whatsoever. Nevers, however, acquainted with the artifices of the Roman priesthood, and probably looking upon this exuberant display of reluctance as affected for latent purposes, passed over all these difficulties, made his way to the Papal Court, and for some weeks carried on negotiations with the Pontiff; but Clement showed a degree of brutal bigotry which incensed even the devout Nevers; and after having been treated with indignity, and having heard the Pontiff declare, that if an angel from Heaven told him Henry was truly converted, he would not believe it,* he quitted Rome, leaving his mission unaccom-

* Mem. de Nevers, tom. 2, p. 463.

plished. The letters of the Duke from the Court of Rome, and the termination of his negotiation in an abrupt and almost hostile manner, might have given great pain to the King, who was eager to reap from his conversion the fruit of peace and order in his kingdom, if he had not been aware of facts which, it would seem, were concealed from Nevers himself at the time. The open negotiation of the Duke was in reality nothing but a pageant, as almost all the public transactions of the Court of Rome have always been; and the absolution of the King was treated for by secret agents, employed both before and after the embassy of Nevers. The principal partizan of Henry in the imperial city, in point of talent, activity, and energy, was the well known Arnold d'Ossat, a man of low birth, without any known relations, with no public functions, an advocate without practice, a priest in extreme poverty, and only distinguished by the friendship of some eminent men, and a high literary reputation. Nevertheless, taking up the interest of the King with zeal and affection, he day by day made secret progress in his cause, directed Clielle, a royal agent who preceded Nevers, co-operated with Gondi and Duperron some time after, and obtained private assurances, which he transmitted to the King, at a very early period of the negotiation, that however repulsive the demeanor of the Pope might be to the Duke of Nevers, the desired absolution would ultimately be granted. Henry, indeed, was far from

easy on the subject; for notwithstanding the secret information derived from d'Ossat, he might well doubt, as others have since doubted, whether Clement was acting sincerely with any one, and whether he was not protracting his open resistance while he privately encouraged hope, in order to see what turn the affairs of France might take, and shape his policy by the success or failure of the faction which had been nurtured by the gold of Rome. Certain it is, that though he reproached the Spanish monarch with the niggardly spirit he had displayed in supporting the Papal party in France, he treated the envoys of the League with favor, and induced them to expect that he would firmly refuse to absolve the King, confirming his assurances by the intemperate violence which he displayed towards Nevers.

Thus far the leaders of the League were successful, and their preachers also obtained the results which they sought, in instigating an attempt upon Henry's life. That monarch, after having established severe tolls upon all commodities which passed the towns he held in the neighborhood of Paris, retired to Melun, where he received an intimation, sent by Seraphin Bianchi, an Italian monk then residing at Lyons, that a person named Barriere had set out to assassinate him. M. de Brancaleon, by whom the intelligence was brought, received orders to watch for the murderer, who was seen for a moment on the 26th August, before

the house in which the King resided, but disappeared immediately, and was not arrested till the following day. Having then been put to the torture, he confessed his crime, and implicated several persons, amongst whom were two Jesuits, the curate of St. Andrew's at Paris, and one or two other monks and priests, all of whom, he said, had encouraged him in his design. As he varied his confessions, however, in the different examinations which took place, Henry did not think fit to pursue in any way the persons he accused; but the assassin himself was given up to justice, and was put to death with all the barbarous inflictions, which, in those days were sanctioned by the law.

As the truce approached its close, the Leaguers eagerly solicited its prolongation for two months; and after some difficulty Henry granted their request; but he forced Villars to raise the siege of Fescamp, which he had continued, notwithstanding the suspension of arms, upon the pretence that his contest with Bois Rogé, the governor, was a private quarrel. Bois Rogé made his full submission to the King about the same period, but whether before or after the raising of the siege I do not discover.* The Court of the French monarch now became a market to which his rebellious subjects and towns brought their obedience for sale at various prices. Some demanded much, others were more moderate

* Some authors say it was before, others after.

in their requirements; some with a greater degree of generosity came over without previous stipulation; but all sooner or later looked for some recompense, and in most cases obtained it. Monsieur de Vitry, one of the first who joined the party of the King after his conversion, gave notice at once to Mayenne, and other leaders of the League, that as he had opposed Henry because he was a heretic, he would now serve him because he was a Catholic. He begged them to take their measures accordingly; and in the month of December, 1593, he gave up the keys of Meaux, of which town he was governor, to the magistrates of the place, assumed the white scarf, and set out to join the King at the head of his company of horse, leaving his wife to follow. Before she could do so, however, the inhabitants had adopted the same resolution as their governor; Madame de Vitry was entreated to send a messenger to call him back; and Vitry returning, obtained a promise from the citizens of fidelity to the King. For this service he received twenty thousand crowns, and the government of Meaux, under Henry. La Chatre soon after brought the submission of the towns of Orleans and Bourges, upon the same conditions that had been obtained by Vitry, with the additional promise of the Marshal's baton. Villeroy, the steady supporter and confidant of Mayenne, disgusted with the insincerity which that nobleman had displayed towards him, made his peace with the King in the commencement of 1594, and day after day some new

adherent of the League came over to the party of Henry. Lyons, it is supposed at the instigation of its Archbishop and Mayenne, had risen in September, 1593, against the Duke of Nemours, who was endeavoring to create for himself an independent sovereignty on the banks of the Rhone. The citizens seized his person, and imprisoned him in the castle of Pierre-encise; and in February, 1594, the principal inhabitants entered into correspondence with Alphonso Ornano, and rising against the Leaguers, declared their submission to the King.* Aix, and a number of other places, followed, and the example thus set had no slight effect in the capital itself.

In the mean time, Henry made various expeditions to different parts of his dominions; he visited Dieppe, returned to Mantes, passed a short time at Fontainebleau, and made a public entry into Meaux; but during all these journeys, he from time to time held earnest conferences with the Roman Catholic clergy on the subject of religion, although he listened mildly to the complaints and remonstrances of his Protestant subjects, and assured them, that at a proper time he would do the best for them that he could. At the request of du Perron, he suffered a dispute between that ecclesiastic and some of the learned

* Anquetil passes over all the facts regarding the imprisonment of the Duke of Nemours, attributing it entirely to Mayenne, without speaking of the revolt of the citizens of Lyons. See Hist. de France, Vol. vii. p. 355.

Protestants to take place at Mantes. Nothing resulted from this meeting, as might be supposed; and Henry, as soon as the truce was at an end, laid siege to La Ferté, which he soon forced to surrender, while Sully, then Baron de Rosni, negotiated secretly with Villars for the submission of Rouen, and Villeroy labored, but without success, to convince Mayenne of the necessity of making peace with the King.

The affairs of the leader of the League were reduced by this time to so deplorable a state, that no reasonable hope could be entertained of his recovering even a temporary ascendancy. In every quarter of France, the Royalist party was daily increasing; in Paris itself it was known to be powerful, though the members concealed their views under the name of Politics; the court of Rome gave no active assistance to the rebels, and Henry himself, by accident and by stratagem, obtained the clearest proofs that the Spanish monarch, incapable of forgiveness, remembered with bitter animosity, that Mayenne had interposed to prevent the elevation of the Infanta to the throne of France. A secret envoy from the League to the court of Spain was accidentally arrested by a body of Royalists, and the letters found upon him showed that he was entrusted with negotiations of importance. It was also discovered, upon his examination, that he was personally unknown to the Spanish ministers, and M. de la Varenne, one of Henry's attached dependants, undertook the somewhat dangerous task

of personating the ambassador of the League in Spain. The stratagem proved perfectly successful; the letters which had been found upon the person of the real envoy were sufficient to obtain full confidence for Varenne with the Spanish ministers; Philip himself conferred with him in private; and the whole designs of that monarch's cabinet were displayed in regard to France. La Varenne escaped from Spain just in time to avoid being arrested, and Henry thus learned that, although Mayenne might be used as a tool to stir up fresh dissensions in the land, the power he had derived from Spain to menace the monarchy itself had passed from his hands for ever.

It was sufficiently painful to the heart of a wise and humane sovereign, to see the period of restoring his country to peace and prosperity retarded by the machinations of an ambitious and insatiable enemy. Nothing, however, remained for Henry, but, step by step, to deprive the leader of his rebellious subjects of the followers who supported him from mercenary or fanatical motives, and of the vain hopes which deluded him with visions of future greatness and success. Arms were of course a means to be employed for this end; but the King failed not to make use of all those milder methods which might advance his object without the effusion of blood. Aware of the effect of forms and ceremonies upon the imagination of the people, Henry resolved to carry through his coronation notwithstanding the

war; but as Rheims was still in the hands of his enemies, he received the crown in the town of Chartres on the 27th of February, 1594, and was anointed with the holy oil preserved at the Abbey of St. Martin, of Tours.

In the meantime, the Royalists were exerting themselves with great vigor in the capital itself; and several of the most distinguished officers of the faction were secretly gained to the interests of the King. The Count de Belin, Governor of the city, who had been made prisoner at Arques, and had never forgotten the courtesy with which Henry had treated him, appeared so openly as his partizan, that the Spanish ministers and the Sixteen resolved to effect his removal from office; and Mayenne yielded to their request, though not without strong remonstrances on the part of the Parliament, which openly, by its decrees, attacked the Spanish faction, and declared itself determined to oppose their designs. Belin, however, was dismissed with some complimentary assurances on the part of Mayenne, which did not restrain him from immediately joining the King. Several of the *Politics*, also, were ordered to quit the city, and a fresh body of Spanish troops was introduced. The person chosen to succeed M. de Belin was the Count de Brissac, who had likewise been a prisoner in Henry's hands. He was now embroiled in a bitter quarrel with the Duke of Aumale and several other members of the League. Nevertheless, the Spaniards and the Sixteen testified

the greatest joy at his appointment, and looked upon his perseverance in rebellion as certain.

The situation of Paris, however, was becoming every day more difficult, and disunion was hourly spreading in the faction; the surrender of Pontoise to the King by M. d'Alincourt, who joined his father Villeroy in making submission, completed the blockade; the Royalist forces swept the country to the very gates of the city; and no one dared to venture forth except with a passport or a strong escort. The Duke of Guise quitted the capital, discontented with all that had taken place. Orleans had fallen into Henry's hands, Rouen was known to be negotiating; mutual distrust existed between Mayenne, the Spaniards, and the Sixteen, and the Duke, seeing that the capital was no longer a place in which he could command respect, or even ensure safety, determined to quit Paris, after long and agitated hesitation, which evinced too plainly the state of embarrassment to which he was reduced. Before he went, he endeavored to reanimate the party of the Sixteen, which he had formerly crushed; but the very attempt roused the indignation of that fraction of the Parliament which continued in Paris, and many of the members who had previously remained firm in their attachment to the League, thenceforward co-operated with the Attorney General Molé, who had long been secretly laboring in the cause of the King. At length, on the 6th of March, the Duke executed his purpose

and left the capital, upon the pretence of meeting some Spanish forces under Count Charles of Mansveldt. But the fact of his taking the Duchess and his children with him, afforded the Parisians a key to his real motives.

It is probable that Mayenne did not abandon his partizans in the metropolis without entertaining a suspicion, that Paris would be speedily placed in the hands of the Royalists by the Governor, whom he himself had chosen; for we find that, previous to his departure, the Duchess of Nemours* had discovered that some sort of communication had been established between Brissac and Henry by the means of Anthony de Rochepot. She immediately made the fact known to her son; but the Duke turned a deaf ear to the charge, and neglected her exhortation to treat with his sovereign, while he yet had command of the capital. He displayed no want of confidence in the Governor, and, shortly before he set out, furnished him with several blank letters of exile, to enable him to deal in a summary manner, with any person whom he might judge it expedient to expel from Paris.†

The conduct of Brissac was soon determined after

* Anne of Este, Duchess of Nemours, was twice married, first to Francis, Duke of Guise, assassinated by Poltrot, by whom she had several sons, amongst others, the Duke of Mayenne; and secondly, to James of Savoy, Duke of Nemours.

† Anquetil confounds the negotiation commenced by Rochepot and discovered by the Duchess of Nemours, with that afterwards carried on between Brissac and St. Luc.

the departure of Mayenne; an interview was arranged between him and his brother-in-law, St. Luc, at the Abbey of St. Antoine, the pretext assigned being a law-suit then pending between them; and during their conference a plan was sketched out for giving Henry entrance into his capital. The two gentlemen, and the lawyers who accompanied them, parted apparently in anger, and Brissac, returning into the town, summoned to take council with him a number of the members of the Parliament and officers of the city, on whose loyalty he could rely. From this secret assembly every sort of false rumor regarding the events which were taking place without the walls was spread, in order to embarrass and occupy the Leaguers; and the whole details of the plan for delivering the city to the King, and the terms upon which he was to receive peaceable admission, having been arranged, they were communicated to Henry, who resolved to make the attempt on the morning of the 22nd of March.

Brissac had by that time made every preparation for giving admittance to the Royal forces. He had taken possession of the Porte Neuve, and on the pretence of building a wall instead, had removed the earth with which it was blocked up. He placed several other gates in the hands of citizens on whom he could rely, and dispersed bands of armed men through the different quarters of the town, to favor the operations of the King's troops. It had been determined that the entrance was to be effected

on several points at once; that the garrisons of Melun and Corbeil were to drop down the river, and be received by one of Brissac's officers at the head of a great body of citizens and boatmen; and that the moment the troops had entered the town, they were to make a movement for the purpose of separating a body of Walloons, who were quartered at the Temple, from the Spaniards, who were posted in the neighborhood of St. Eustacia and the Porte St. Denis.

On the evening of the day preceding the attempt, reports were purposely spread that the King had signed a treaty with the Duke of Mayenne, and that a large quantity of treasure, on its road to the court, had already arrived at Palaiseau. On the diffusion of this last intelligence Brissac sent out a zealous partizan of Spain, named James Ferrarois, at the head of two companies of determined Leaguers, to seek for the imaginary booty, and thus delivered himself from the presence of a considerable body of men who might have proved troublesome within the walls.*

Notwithstanding every precaution, the Cardinal Legate, and the Duke of Feria, received a vague intimation that something was intended against

* The troops sent out were two French companies, not Spaniards, as Anquetil asserts, and the object was to surprise a quantity of treasure supposed to be on its way to the court, not to escort a convoy sent to Paris by Mayenne, as that writer declares. This is proved by Etoile and other eye-witnesses of what was passing in the capital.

them, and sending for Brissac on the evening of the 21st, they besought him to take measures to prevent surprise. Brissac treated their fears lightly, but agreed at once to visit the walls. By order of the Ambassador, who still entertained suspicions of the Governor, he was accompanied on his round by a small party of Spanish soldiers, who, we are assured, received orders to poniard the French officer, if, in their course, they distinguished any sound, which announced the approach of an enemy to the gates of the city; and, although this charge may have arisen merely in one of the false reports which are always so busy in a city agitated by contending factions, there can be no doubt, that the most violent and atrocious schemes for the total destruction of the Royalist party in Paris, were agitated in the secret councils held by the Sixteen and their accomplices. All, however, was still. No sound announced the approach of an enemy; the guards were at their post, and the Spaniards retired satisfied to rest. The faction of the Sixteen also visited the walls; but so well had Brissac taken his measures, that they were also deceived, and retired to rest between two and three in the morning.

A little before four, on the morning of the 22d, Brissac and the Prevôt des Marchands issued forth in silence; and, having placed a guard over the house of the Duke of Feria, with orders to fire upon any person who came forth, they proceeded to the Porte Neuve, opened it, and let down the drawbridge. The King's troops had not yet

appeared, some accidental delay having occurred, and the Governor had to wait several minutes before Vitry and other noblemen, with the first party of Royalists, arrived at the gate.

Shortly after four o'clock the inhabitants of Paris were awakened by a noise from the neighborhood of the school of St. Germain; and a number of persons running out, found a body of the King's forces, who had just cut to pieces a small corps of Lanzknechts, by whom their passage had been opposed. The troops, in the meantime, marched on in perfect order, entering no house, committing no violence upon the citizens, but taking possession of the bridges, the squares, and the ramparts, and pointing the cannon down the principal streets. The citizens, who had gone forth, returned to their houses, waiting for farther movements, and spreading the news that the King was in the city.

Henry, however, did not make his entrance for nearly an hour, when he appeared unarmed at the Porte Neuve;* he was there met by Brissac, who immediately presented him with a magnificent scarf, upon which the King, taking off his own, threw it over the Governor's shoulder, addressing him by the title of Marshal of France. The Prevôt des Marchands delivered the keys, which the King received graciously, and Henry proceeded along the streets amidst shouts of "Peace! peace! long live

* Anquetil, with his usual inaccuracy, would lead one to believe that Henry was armed, but such was not the case; and the error is not so unimportant as it seems at first sight.

the King!" One of the first acts of the monarch was to hear mass in the church of Notre Dame; and his procession thence to the Louvre, with the trumpets sounding, the bells ringing, and the faces of thousands pressing to see him, so that he could hardly move through the streets, while they rent the air with acclamations, presented a scene such as Paris had not witnessed for many years.

Having ascertained, with his own eyes, that welcome and gratulation were all he had to expect from the citizens, Henry entered the palace of the Kings of France. He found it in possession of his household, the officers of the Crown waiting his appearance in their order, and the morning meal prepared, as if no change had taken place, although it was now six years since the halls of the Louvre had been trod by the steps of a monarch. The Spaniards at first, with a force amounting to between four and five thousand men, showed some intention of maintaining the post they occupied, but the King having despatched a messenger to the Duke of Feria, with an order to send him immediately the Colonel of the Walloons, who had been arrested some days before on a charge of favoring the King, the Duke obeyed promptly. Henry in return commanded one of his officers to tell him that he would be permitted to quit Paris, and retire to Flanders with all the foreign troops of the garrison, provided no attempt at resistance was made. The Duke willingly embraced the course suggested, and retired

from the French capital, accompanied by a number of the more furious Leaguers, who took refuge in the ranks of the Spanish soldiery. If the retreat of this small body of citizens was produced by fear, it was unnecessary; for two days before, while at Senlis, the King had caused a great number of notes to be prepared, and signed them with his own hand, by the tenor of which he pledged himself, upon the faith and word of a monarch, not to pursue in any way such of the citizens as had been in rebellion against him, and forbade his officers, civil and military, in any manner to injure or molest them. These notes were placed in the hands of Brissac and other noblemen, and distributed amongst those who had rendered themselves obnoxious, on their submitting to the power of the King. Towards two o'clock, the Spaniards marched out by the Porte St. Denis, and the King, having placed himself at a window near the gate, saluted them by pulling off his hat. Their arms were lowered, their matches extinguished, their banners furled, and as they passed the King, their leaders bent the knee and thanked him for his clemency and magnanimity.* Henry replied with courtesy and kindness, and ended by saying: "Adieu, gentlemen! adieu! commend me to your master, and go in peace, but do not come back again."

* Le Grain. Decade de Henri Quatre. It is to be remarked that Le Grain was present at this scene, and I have, therefore, adopted his account, although other historians only mark, that Henry spoke kindly to the Spanish leaders, and give the last words that he addressed to them.

In the space of a few hours, the most perfect tranquillity was restored in Paris, which was only interrupted by dancing, festivity, and rejoicing. The Bastille held out, indeed, hopelessly, and was not surrendered till the Saturday following. St. Luc was sent to assure the Cardinal Pelevé, the Legate, and the Duchesses of Nemours and Montpensier, that they might remain with the most perfect security. Pelevé, however, died the same day;* but the Duchess of Montpensier, who had been well known to Henry in former days, accommodating herself to the times, went to visit him at the Louvre, and was seen playing at cards with the King, in the presence of the whole court, on the very night of his arrival. Another anecdote of the King's entrance into Paris must not be omitted. As the baggage of La Noue, one of his chief supporters, was being brought into the city, it was seized by the officers of the town for a debt, which his father, the celebrated General, had contracted in the service of the Crown. La Noue hastened instantly to the King to complain; but Henry replied: "We must pay our debts, La Noue. I pay mine." But, at the same time, the King drew him aside from the Court; and not having money sufficient to satisfy the debt, he gave him jewels to pledge for the deliverance of his baggage.

The generous forbearance of the King was extended to his enemies of all classes, even after the

* De Thou. The death of this personage is stated by Cayet to have taken place upon 24th March, and by l'Etoile on the 28th.

complete submission of Paris placed them in his power, and vengeance might have been exercised without risk or loss. I find the names of one hundred and twenty-two persons, who were ordered to retire from the capital for a time; but all were treated with the utmost gentleness; and to every leaguer was offered the choice of submitting and taking an oath of allegiance, or of receiving a passport to join the Duke of Mayenne. The monarch seemed resolved to conquer the hearts of his people by kindness, and succeeded so far that, for some time after his arrival, it was with difficulty he made his way through the streets, the people crowding round him wherever he went. The captain of the guard more than once endeavored to clear a passage, but Henry forbade him to drive the people back, saying, that they were "starving to see a King." The acts of the pretended States General were condemned by the Parliament, and declared null and void; the Duke of Mayenne was deprived, by an edict from the same body, of his title of Lieutenant-General, and summoned, with all his abettors, to make immediate submission to the King; but by Henry's express command, every memorial of the public acts of the League in Paris, which might give occasion to after proceedings, was destroyed, so that no trace remained of those transactions which could have perpetuated party rancor, and endangered the tranquillity of the capital.

The acquisition of Paris hastened the submission

of various other towns; Rouen, notwithstanding the high eulogium which Sully passes upon Villars, was sold by that officer very dear. Montreuil, Abbeville, Troyes, Sens, Riom, Agen, Marmande, Villeneuve, and Poictiers, were rapidly added to the list of surrendered places. Balagny, who had sent his wife in secret to treat with Henry at Dieppe, recognized the King, retaining for himself the feudal dominion of the Cambresis, which he had held for many years. Beauvais, Peronne, and Amiens, detached themselves from the party of the League. The Duke of Guise himself submitted, bringing with him the keys of Rheims, Vitry, and Mezieres; and the Duke of Lorraine entered into a treaty of peace, which was concluded by Bassompierre on the 4th of November, 1594.

One effort was made by the Spaniards to revive the courage of the League; and Count Charles of Mansveldt, entering Picardy, in which only three towns held out against the King, laid siege to La Capelle in the end of April, and forced it to surrender on the ninth of May, before the King's army, which was collected with great difficulty, could arrive to its deliverance. Biron, at the head of the Royal troops, indeed, appeared a few days after, but Mansveldt was too strongly entrenched to be attacked, and the French general, by Henry's order, turned upon Laon, which place was immediately besieged.

The course of Mayenne, after having abandoned

the capital, had not been unattended with difficulties and dangers of various kinds. His first resting place was at Soissons, but he afterwards proceeded into Brabant, where he endeavored, both by entreaty and argument, to wring some efficient support from the Spanish Government. We are assured, though without any absolute proof of the fact, that the Council of the Archduke deliberated for some time, as to whether they should not cause his arrest, on the charge of having betrayed the interests of the King of Spain in the matter of the election of the Infanta. If such was really the case, no such design was executed; as we find Mayenne sharing the command of the allied army with Count Charles of Mansveldt in the campaign of Picardy.

The city of Laon had been strongly fortified and garrisoned; and as it was supposed to be impregnable by any force which Henry could bring against it, the Duke had placed within the walls his second son, and a great part of his moveable property.* The actual defence of the place was entrusted to Dubourg l'Espinasse, lately Governor of the Bastille, and every thing was prepared for determined

* The author, whose errors I have had so frequently occasion to notice, declares that the defence of Laon was entrusted to Mayenne's son. But Sully, who was at the commencement of the siege, names Du Bourg as the commander in the place, though he, as well as all other historians, mentions the fact of the young Count of Sommariva being within the walls.

resistance, when Biron, finding it in vain to attack the Spanish General in his camp near La Capelle, sat down beneath the walls. The King in person, shortly after joined his army, and carried on the siege with great vigor, notwithstanding all the efforts of Mayenne and Mansveldt to impede his progress. Two attempts were made to throw supplies into the town, but both were defeated after a severe struggle, and the allied Generals then resolved upon the somewhat hazardous enterprise of attacking Henry in his quarters at a moment when he was thrown off his guard. The particulars of this proceeding are so curious, and the anecdotes connected with it afford us such an interesting glimpse of Henry himself, that I shall give the account of Sully, who was with the King at the time, as nearly as possible in his own words, though the extract may be somewhat longer than I could desire. "The great convoy having been defeated, the King continued the siege of Laon without obstacle, till fresh intelligence arrived, to the effect that Mansveldt and Mayenne, far from being discouraged by their bad success, talked of nothing but of forcing the lines of the besiegers, as soon as they had received some reinforcements which they expected. Marshal Biron treated this information as ridiculous; but his Majesty, who neglected nothing, was not satisfied, till after Givri,* whom he sent to reconnoitre with

* It must be remarked that Sully was always extremely jealous of Givri, and endeavors on all occasions to place that gallant officer's conduct in the worst light.

three hundred horse, and with express orders not to return without full knowledge of the situation and forces of the enemy, had reported at the end of three days, that there was not yet a single company on the hither side of the Oise, and that the Spaniards rather thought of taking their way back to Flanders, than advancing upon Laon. The King, trusting to the accuracy of this report, made a party that very evening to dine on the following day at St. Lambert: a house belonging to the domain of Navarre, and situated in the midst of the forest, to which he had often gone to eat fruit, and fresh milk, and cheese, during the stay he had made at the Chateau de Marle, in the days of his youth, and in revisiting which he still took great pleasure."

"We accompanied him to St. Lambert," Sully continues, "to the number of thirty; and as he had passed a part of the preceding night in examining, according to his custom, the trenches, the batteries, and the mines, he fell asleep as soon as he had dined. His good constitution of body, joined to the habit of enduring fatigue, had accustomed him to sleep in any place, and whenever he would to wake up in the same manner. It was then extremely hot, and we went eight or ten together to seek for coolness in the thickest part of the forest of Folambray, at a little distance from the high road from La Fere to Laon. We had not proceeded more than twelve or fifteen hundred paces, when a noise, which was heard from the side of La Fere, caused

us to give ear attentively. It seemed the confused mixture of human voices, smacking of whips, neighing of horses, and a dull buzz, like the sound of trumpets and drums heard in the distance. We advanced as far as the high road to hear better, and we then saw distinctly, at about eight hundred paces before us, what appeared to us a column of foreign infantry, marching in good order, and without noise. That which we had heard was caused by the servants and camp followers, which came after, and by the drivers of a considerable force of artillery. Carrying our view as far as it would reach, we saw defile after these waggons so great a number of troops, that we no longer doubted that it was the whole army of the enemy.

"We returned hastily upon our steps, and, finding the King, who, just awakened, was shaking a plum tree, the fruit of which we had found delicious: 'Pardie, Sire,' we said, 'we have just seen people passing who are getting ready other plums for you, and somewhat more difficult to digest.' The explanation was given in few words; time pressed; and the King had the less difficulty in believing, as he told us he also had heard something for the last quarter of an hour; but that rather than suppose Givri had so badly executed his commission, he had judged that the noise was from his own camp.

"His Majesty gave orders to twelve of us who were at hand, to go instantly towards the different quarters of the cavalry, of which he always carried

a list in his pocket, to spread the alarm amongst them, and to press them all to hurry to head quarters, while a part of us proceeded to the infantry, to form it into battalions, and place it between head quarters and the trenches. He mounted his horse as he spoke these commands, and although he proceeded at full gallop, he gave orders to all whom he met, with the same precision and scope as if he had been long prepared for a battle.

"Thanks to such celerity, and to that admirable presence of mind, which caused nothing to escape the attention of the Prince, in circumstances where any one in his place, instead of forming a regular plan, would hardly have been capable of adopting a rational resolution, the enemy surprised no one, which, perhaps, saved the army from the greatest misfortunes; for it must be owned, that if the adverse cavalry, which appeared at the same moment at the entrance of the camp, had once spread a panic amongst the soldiers, which would undoubtedly have happened from the effect of a surprise, the King, and a part of the officers being absent, it would have been easy, in that first moment of confusion, to carry one, or many of our quarters, and, perhaps, fear would have given them possession of all the rest.

"This single example would be sufficient to prove how useful it is for the General of an army, not only to possess that quality of mind which enables him to seize upon all points of a question, though

they may be infinite, but to know by their names, their capacity, and their good and bad qualities, both the officers and the different corps of his army."

Notwithstanding the hurry and confusion which must have been apparent in the King's camp, the Spanish Generals did not venture to make the attack they had meditated; and after having remained within sight for two days, and skirmished unsuccessfully, in the hope of throwing reinforcements into Laon, they retreated during the night to La Fere. Not long after, the city demanded terms of capitulation, and it was agreed that, if not succored in ten days by a battle, or the introduction of at least eight hundred men, it should be surrendered. An effort was made to throw supplies into the place, but the reinforcements, sent by Mayenne and Mansveldt, were discovered in ambuscade, in a neighboring wood by the King's hounds, and literally hunted by the dogs. They separated, flying in all directions to conceal themselves; and, on the failure of this attempt, Laon, which was torn by intestine divisions, surrendered some days before the period fixed by the articles of capitulation. The allied generals were forced to abandon their camp near La Fere, and retired into the Low Countries, pursued by the King's cavalry. An infectious disease shortly after broke out amongst the Spanish and Walloon troops, and the whole army became completely disorganised.

From Laon, Henry proceeded along the Flemish frontier to Amiens, one of the most turbulent towns in France; but the citizens, not long before, had driven out the principal partizans of the League; and as much rejoicing took place on the monarch's arrival, as if the inhabitants had been the most loyal people in the realm.

The Duke of Mayenne, in the meantime, retired to Brussels; but finding it impossible to draw any farther aid from the Archduke, for defence of the League in the northern provinces of France he soon after turned his steps, first to Lorraine; and thence to Burgundy, which still remained attached to the faction of which he was the head. The Mayor of the important town of Dijon, however, had already entered into negotiations with Henry for the surrender of that place; but intelligence of his proceedings was communicated to Mayenne while still in Lorraine; and that Prince, with the angry virulence of disappointment, sent orders for his instant arrest and trial. The Mayor was immediately seized, condemned, and decapitated; an act of lawless and needless cruelty which could produce no beneficial result.

Two days after this event, the Duke arrived in Dijon himself; but in the interim, affairs had been taking place at the Court of Henry, which daily reduced the power and influence of his rebellious subject. Not only individuals, but whole districts, followed to swear allegiance, and the name of the

League was now only employed to obtain advantages, but not to justify resistance. The King was not less placable than ever, and in a conversation with the Duchess of Nemours, the mother of Mayenne, he replied, in a tone of gentle compassion, when he observed that she shed tears while expressing a regret that her children had not taken advantage of his clemency: "Madam, it is yet time if they wish it."

The Duke, however, though from time to time he continued to treat with Henry, through his agent the President Jeannin, required such enormous concessions as the price of his submission, that the King would not listen to his proposals. At the same time Mayenne pursued his negotiations with Spain, still entertaining expectations which can only be attributed to temporary hallucination. It is probable that he had received some promise of support from Philip before he left Brussels; and his object now seems to have been to render himself independent in Burgundy, an attempt in which the Spanish monarch was not unwilling to encourage him, for the purpose of maintaining those divisions in France, which might divert the forces of that kingdom from any interference with his own ambitious designs.

For some time after the fall of Laon, Henry IV. pursued his military operations in the north, and besieged the town of Noyon, which surrendered in the beginning of October, 1594. He then

returned to St. Germain for a few days, but was soon in arms once more; and visiting Cambray, he directed his troops in a demonstration upon the frontiers of the Low Countries, anxious to afford a diversion to his Protestant allies in the United Provinces. To the States of Hainault and Spanish Artois, he sent letters, expressing his unwillingness to carry hostilities into a part of the country which had already suffered so much, but warning them, that if the King of Spain persisted in supporting his rebellious subjects, and ravaging the territories of France, he should be obliged formally to declare war against that sovereign before the end of January, 1595. Having taken these measures, he returned to Paris, where his presence was greatly required.

Immediately after the submission of that city, innumerable intrigues had arisen; and both friends and enemies seemed to forget that they had no longer to deal with a monarch dependant upon the chances of a battle for the stability of his throne, and the recognition of his rights. The Protestants murmured angrily at the favor shown to the Papists; the Roman Catholics doubted the sincerity of the King's conversion; the Duke of Bouillon, on whom he had bestowed the hand of the heiress of Sedan, fomented the discontent of both;* and a trial had commenced in the Parliament between the University and the Jesuits,

* Sully.

which was likely to produce very dangerous consequences to the state. To crown all, Henry, while carrying on the siege of Laon, received intimation that the Count d'Auvergne, and the family of Entragues, were actively conspiring against him; he therefore instantly despatched Rosni, afterwards Duke of Sully, to examine more closely the state of affairs in the capital; but the report of his friend, on his return to the camp, was anything but calculated to diminish his apprehensions. The Protestant nobleman had found, that nightly meetings were held between the Count d'Auvergne, d'Entragues, and the principal members of the Spanish faction, and the League; and that the Jesuits had formed a powerful party in their favor, and acquired the countenance of nearly one-half of the Parliament, so that their banishment from France, which was demanded by their opponents, and justified by their conduct, might be attended with very serious consequences, and even bring into greater doubt than ever with the Roman Catholics the sincerity of the King's conversion. To avoid such a result, Henry sent orders to his council, to the effect, that the proceedings against the Jesuits should be suspended, and that if the trial could not legally be stopped, as the crown was not actually the prosecutor, the royal authority should be used to prevent any violent measures from being resorted to against the defendants.

The intrigues of the Count d'Auvergne, however, still proceeded, as did also those of the Duke of Bouillon, and in the end, both suffered themselves to be carried on to acts, from the just punishment of which, they were only saved by the moderation and clemency of the monarch against whom they conspired. With these, and many other embarrassments springing up in his path, Henry set out for the capital, and arrived at the Louvre between six and seven o'clock on the evening of the 27th of December; but his welcome to Paris was a new attempt to deprive him of life. As he was standing in one of the rooms of the Palace,* a few minutes after his arrival, and still in his riding dress, Monsieur de Montigni and Monsieur de Ragni, with a number of their attendants, were introduced to congratulate him on his return; and while they were kneeling, a young man from behind them aimed a blow at the King's throat with a knife.

Henry at that moment was stooping to raise de Montigni, with his accustomed courtesy; and that act saved his life, for the point of the assassin's weapon, instead of reaching his bosom, caught upon

* To show the uncertainty of the evidence on which history is founded, it may be as well to state, that many authors have declared that this attempt at assassination was not made at the Louvre, but at the Hotel d'Estrée, not in a chamber, but in the court-yard. But Henry himself must have known where the act took place, and he says, in a letter to Lyons, written the same night, that it was in a room to which the assassin had followed some noblemen, as I have stated above.

his lip and teeth. Henry feeling himself hurt, and at first imagining that it was by the hand of a woman, named Mathurine, who, notwithstanding her sex, had long frequented the Louvre in the quality of a court fool, exclaimed, "Devil take the fool! she has wounded me."

Mathurine, however, with great presence of mind, immediately ran and closed the doors; and at the same time de Montigni seized the real assassin, saying, "Either you or I have wounded the King."* As soon as Henry, who was bleeding copiously from the mouth, saw the youth in the hands of the attendants, he commanded them to let him go, generously exclaiming, "I pardon him!"

This order was disobeyed; and on being searched, the assassin threw down the bloody knife with which he had made the attempt. It was soon discovered that the regicide was named Jean Chatel, and that he was the son of a wealthy draper of Paris, and a pupil of the Jesuits. He boldly confessed the act, without being put to the torture, avowed that he had long meditated it, and would attempt it again if he had the opportunity; and at the same time, though he exculpated his father of all share in his crime, his words cast so much suspicion upon the Jesuits, that their College was immediately surrounded, and

* Memoires de Cheverny. De Thou declares that these words were uttered by the Count of Soissons; but in this assertion he evidently falls into an error.

several of the order arrested. The people were with difficulty prevented from breaking into the house and taking summary vengeance; and the nobles were far from discouraging the violence of the populace. But Henry sent his guard to protect the College, and contented himself with suffering the proceedings against them, which had been already commenced by the Parliament but stopped by his command, to be renewed. The unhappy young man himself, by his confession, clearly showed that he had been worked upon by the preachers of Paris till he fully believed he was justified in killing a monarch, to whom the Pope still denied absolution. Upon this confession he was condemned by the Parliament to be torn by four horses, which sentence was executed on the night of the 29th of December. Guignard, the Regent of the Jesuit's College, having acknowledged that he had openly sustained nine propositions, one more treasonable than another, was sentenced to be hanged, and his body burned, and a decree was pronounced and executed, banishing the Jesuits from France, and forbidding all French subjects, under the penalties affixed to high treason, from sending their children to be educated by that dangerous body. Chatel, the father, who was proved to have heard his son express his intention of killing the King, without doing more than offer some faint dissuasions, was banished for nine years; and his house having been rased to the ground, a pyramid

was erected on the spot, bearing the sentence against the assassin and his instigators the Jesuits.*

The whole of these proceedings greatly affected the King. When first it was discovered that the assassin was a pupil of the disciples of Loyola, he exclaimed, remembering his intervention in their favor, "Was it absolutely needful that the Jesuits should be condemned by my mouth?" and for several days he remained gloomy and sad. But as usual, business and pleasure were his resources against such bitter mortifications; and the year 1595 was one of the most active and important of his life.

* Cayet. Journal de Henri IV. It may not be amiss to give some examples of the doctrines taught by the Jesuits of the College of Clermont, and publicly acknowledged by Guignard. The seventh, eighth, and ninth propositions, which he admitted having sustained, were as follows:—"7. That the crown of France could and ought to be transferred to another family than that of Bourbon. 8. That the Bearnois, being converted to the Catholic faith, would be gently treated if they gave him the monastic crown in some very severe convent, there to do penance for all the evils he has done to France, and thank God for giving him the grace to acknowledge Him before death. 9. That if they cannot depose him without waging war, let them wage it; if they cannot do that, let them put him to death."

BOOK XV.

EARLY in the spring of 1595, Henry, according to the threat he had held out, pronounced war against Spain, the most important act of sovereignty he yet performed. Hitherto his course had been but that of a rightful claimant, struggling for the crown which was denied him. It was now that of a monarch declaring war against a hostile state. The act was strongly opposed by Sully at the time, and censured by him afterwards, as a rash and dangerous experiment, at a moment when the finances of the state were exhausted, and the people wearied of war. But many powerful motives combined to render it necessary in the eyes of the King and his council, which may require to be noticed here. Hostilities had been long actually carried on between France and Spain; and the only result of the policy hitherto pursued had been to render the former kingdom the scene of strife, and to deprive the King of the opportunity of carrying the war into the enemy's country. The efforts of the Spanish Government, it is true, had lost somewhat of their energy, but its enmity was in no degree mitigated; and Henry had every reason to suppose that the

apparent want of activity proceeded from diminished means, rather than from a change of system. His subjects too, were much more likely to give him assistance, and to join in his exertions for the suppression of those internal divisions which had so long convulsed the state, when they found him boldly declaring war against the power by whom dissensions had been fomented in the land. By so doing he materially altered the position of those persons who had leagued with Spain to oppose his claim to the throne; for the united Parliament of Paris was now ready to sanction an act, which removed all doubt as to the treasonable conduct of all, who should thenceforward treat with that country, from which they had hitherto derived their support. At the same time, the declaration of war was of vast importance to the monarch's Protestant allies in the United Provinces, was looked upon as a benefit by many of the minor princes of Germany, was eagerly urged by several of Henry's wisest and most experienced officers, and sanctioned by the opinion of the great majority of his council.

Every reasonable precaution was taken to secure the northern frontier against any attack from the Low Countries; and three experienced generals were left in command of the Royal forces in that quarter. The King at the same time endeavored to reduce those parts of his dominions which still resisted his authority, and Biron was despatched to Burgundy

with a small but veteran army. From Nevers, Bouillon, Villars, and Longueville, who were sent into the north with numerous and well appointed troops, to defend the French territory against the attempts of the Spaniards, Henry exacted a solemn promise, that they would act together in perfect harmony, and he reasonably trusted that they would be able to gain, rather than lose advantages, in any contest with the enemy.*

The King himself spent the spring of the year in Paris, occupied with endeavors to extinguish the spirit of the League, and from one common centre, to direct the operations of his armies in Brittany, in Burgundy, and in Picardy. His task, however, was a laborious and ungrateful one, and the numerous attacks upon his person, together with the daily intelligence which he received that fresh designs of assassination were entertained by his subjects, threw him from time to time into fits of deep melancholy, strongly opposed to his naturally gay and cheerful character. We have no reason to suppose that personal apprehension had any share in producing this dejection; and on one occasion, when Madame de Balagny remarked that he looked sad, he exclaimed, "Ventre Saint Gris, how can I be otherwise, to behold a people so ungrateful towards their King, that, although I have

* A letter from M. de la Font to Sully gives a full account of the misunderstanding of the French commanders, and the evil results which ensued.

done, and do still, all that I can for them, and though for their welfare I would sacrifice a thousand lives, if God had given me so many—as I have evinced enough on occasions—they daily attempt my life." He nevertheless constantly showed himself in the streets of Paris; and when the town council proposed to expel all the Leaguers from Paris, the King refused, saying, "They are all my subjects, and I wish to treat and love them equally." His habitual gaiety, also, was only interrupted occasionally, and he was as full of jest and merriment as ever, often passing off with a quick repartee, that which might have proved dangerous if treated seriously. Thus, when the Parliament sent the President Seguier to remonstrate against a fiscal edict, which they had refused to sanction, the King commanded it to be registered, saying, that, if they hesitated, he would come down himself, and bring half a dozen more decrees in his sleeve. "I only ask," he added the moment after, in a gay tone, "to be treated as they treat the monks, *victus et vestitutus*. Now, Mister President, I often have not enough to eat, and as for my habiliments, look here how I am accoutred," and he pointed to his worn doublet.

To pleasure, however, as usual, he gave up perhaps too much of his time, though his extraordinary activity placed more hours at his command each day, than many others devoted to business in a month. The beautiful Gabrielle was his constant

companion, and was seen somewhat too openly hunting with him in the neighborhood of Paris, dressed in green, and riding hand in hand with her royal lover. Nor were balls and masquerades wanting during the carnival; and in all these amusements the King was day and night amongst his people, notwithstanding the danger to which the bigotry of his enemies exposed him.

The first movements of his armies were all successful; Bouillon cut to pieces a large body of the enemy upon the frontier; a part of the garrison of Soissons was defeated during a foraging party; and Biron taking advantage of a rising of the citizens of Beaune against the governor for Mayenne, made himself master of the town, and captured the citadel, deemed almost impregnable, after a siege of six weeks. Nuits and Autun afterwards shook off the yoke of the League; and the town of Vienne, which had been strengthened by the Duke of Nemours after he had made his escape from Lyons, was gained by Montmorency, who had been lately elevated to the post of Constable.* But the sky was beginning to darken; the Spanish forces were gathering on several points of the frontier; and while Fuentes menaced the northern frontier of France, the Constable of Castile entered Franche Compté, with three thousand horse and fifteen thousand foot, and threatened to march into Burgundy to support Mayenne. This news reached

* In 1593.

Henry in the middle of May, and on the 30th of that month he arrived at Troyes, where he had appointed all the forces which could be spared from other provinces to meet him. While collecting his troops in that city, the agreeable intelligence was brought that the inhabitants of Dijon, having risen against Tavannes, the governor placed over them by Mayenne, had called Biron to their aid, and driven Tavannes with his soldiers into the citadel, where he was closely besieged. Judging that Mayenne and the Constable of Castile would march at once to the relief of their allies in Dijon, Henry, without a moment's delay, put himself at the head of his troops and advanced to support Biron. On the march, he learned that the forces of Spain, with a small body of French malcontents, were passing the Saone at Gray; and after reconnoitering the citadel of Dijon with Biron, he determined to proceed, at the head of fifteen hundred horse, merely intending to impede the enemy's advance till the town could be strengthened against the castle, so as to keep the garrison in check. He further proposed, as soon as the defences of the city were completed, to leave a thousand men in Dijon, and pressing forward into the plain, to offer the Constable battle with all the rest of his army.

This plan was immediately followed, and on the morning of the 5th of June* he began his march with a thousand men at arms, and five hundred

* Journal de Henri IV.

horse arquebusiers. At eight o'clock he halted for two hours at a village half way between Dijon and Gray, to obtain intelligence of the enemy's movements, and then sending the Baron D'Aussonville forward to reconnoitre, advanced at the head of three hundred men towards St. Seine, leaving the rest of his little army to follow and join him at Fontaine Françoise at three o'clock. At the distance of a league from the latter place, Henry received information from three soldiers, sent to him by the Marquis of Mirebeau, that a body of cavalry had been seen, and that there appeared the glimmer of arms in the defiles behind, upon which the King sent forward Biron with one company, while he followed with his own troop. Biron now passed through the small town of Fontaine Françoise, and, on a hill half way between that place and St. Seine, which concealed the ground behind, encountered a body of sixty horse, whom he charged and dislodged. The whole Spanish army was then discovered, descending into St. Seine. A skirmish ensued with a troop of three hundred horse, and Biron was forced slowly back upon the party of the King, the enemy's cavalry becoming more numerous every moment. The Spanish horse then paused for a few minutes on the hill, while Henry prepared his small body to meet them, anxious for the arrival of the rest of his forces, who had not yet come up. The enemy's advanced guard, which had now been joined by Mayenne in person, marched in three

bodies against the King, who was on their right, while two charged Biron on the left. Some authors declare that Biron was routed,* while others assert that he repulsed the enemy; but it is certain that Henry in person, at the head of from sixty to a hundred men, and only half armed, attacked the first corps of Spaniards that approached, and totally defeated them. Then, charging the second, he drove them back in confusion; and while the greater part of his little force pursued the fugitives, wheeled with a troop, computed by Cayet at twenty, upon the third, whom he routed in a similar manner.† The whole of these three bodies, consisting of between seven and eight hundred horse, were thus driven back, in complete disarray, upon the corps of Mayenne, who had remained upon the hill, carried him away with them, and only halted at the corner of a wood, where they found themselves supported by a large body of infantry. Here Henry recalled his men, and retired slowly and in good order, without passing the field where the skirmish had commenced. The hour of rendezvous having now arrived, the troops he had left behind at the village, began to appear; and the enemy retreated to St. Seine, leaving him master of the ground.

Thus ended the combat of Fontaine Françoise,

* Perefix. The different accounts of this combat vary very much from each other.

† Cayet.

in which, Henry afterwards declared, he had fought for his life, whereas in all other battles he had fought for victory. A curious letter to his sister upon the occasion is preserved, in which he says, after giving God the glory of his preservation, that there were two thousand cavalry present upon the part of the enemy; and that Mayenne and the Constable of Castile were in the field, who saw him and knew him well, which he afterwards discovered from the prisoners. He adds; "Those who were not there with me must regret it much, for I had need of all my good friends, and you were very near being my heiress." In other letters, he states that only two hundred horse in all, were engaged upon his own side, and certainly a more marvellous victory has been seldom obtained.

Numerous anecdotes of personal courage and coolness are told regarding the combat of Fontaine Françoise; and the presence of mind and powers of command which Henry displayed in halting his men in the midst of a furious and successful charge, as soon as he perceived a wood upon his left lined with arquebusiers, and withdrawing them in perfect order from a very dangerous position, are justly praised by all contemporaries. So hopeless seemed the affair at one time, that the King's friends besought him to fly on a swift Turkish horse which was held ready; but Henry answered, "I have no need of advice, but only of assistance. There is more peril in the flight than in the chase." So,

indeed, it proved, for in this combat the French lost only six men, while the Spaniards left a hundred and twenty dead upon the field.

After this severe check, the Constable of Castile did not venture to advance upon Dijon, and the citadel of that place, as well as the fort of Talan, by which it was supported, surrendered. Henry then turned his arms against the Spaniards in Franche Comté, and was soon master of all the open country; but the entreaties of the Swiss, and the news he received from Picardy, soon induced him to retire to Lyons, whence he hastened with all his usual energy into the north of France.

Before he quitted Burgundy, however, he performed one of those acts of generous kindness which shed so much lustre on his character. Mayenne had separated from the Constable of Castile in disgust and anger. Chalons was the only place left in which he could find anything like security, and even there he did not dare to remain long, lest he should see himself invested by the army of the conqueror. He proposed, then, to retire to the small town of Sommariva, and thence, after having endeavored to obtain some security for his safety from Philip II., to hasten into Spain, and cast himself upon the bounty of that cold and cruel King. But Henry delivered him from such a perilous situation. Having heard of his difficulties and intentions, the monarch charged Monsieur de Roncheroles to open a communication with one of Mayenne's chief

officers, named Lignerac, and to bring that gentleman to his presence. To him, Henry explained his views, and bade him tell Mayenne that it was not his desire to pursue him with rigor; that if he would give up his connexion with the Spaniards, and retire quietly to Chalons, he should neither be attacked on the march, nor in the place; and that as soon as more pressing affairs admitted, he would treat with him regarding his submission. The Duke gladly availed himself of this clemency, and besought Henry to add to it by allowing him a truce of three months, which was granted, notwithstanding the opposition of the council.

At Lyons the King received intelligence that the Pope had at length agreed to grant him absolution, upon conditions which were not punctually executed; for the decrees of the Council of Trent were not published by the King, and the Protestants were not permanently excluded from office as D'Ossat and Du Perron had promised. The Pope was, apparently, as well contented to bring the affair to a conclusion as the King, and amused himself with whipping D'Ossat and Du Perron in full assembly, as Henry's representatives, after which childish farce he honored and rewarded them; but all excuse was now taken away from the monarch's rebellious subjects, and the absolution was worth a victory.

Some compensation was, indeed, necessary for the disasters which had occurred in Picardy. The

citadel of Ham, dearly bought by the death of Humieres, had been taken in June, leaving only two towns in that province in the hands of the League, but misunderstanding and dispute had spread amongst the King's officers, and the most lamentable defeat which Henry's arms had ever sustained had been the result. Longueville, having been accidentally or intentionally killed by a ball, left in a musket, during a salute fired on his entrance into Dourlens, his brother, the Count de St. Pol, had succeeded to his command; but Nevers and Bouillon were on bad terms, and a fierce rivalry existed between the latter and Villars. On the other hand, Rosne, of whom I have often had to speak, as an ardent Leaguer, had thrown himself into the hands of the Spaniards, and urged Fuentes, one of their best generals, to lay siege to Dourlens, which was immediately done, Le Catelet and La Chapelle having been previously taken by the Spanish forces with very little resistance. The French generals, however, united their powers, and marched to the relief of the place. Fuentes advanced to meet them, and Villars, as soon as the two armies came in presence, made a gallant charge, which was at first completely successful; but Bouillon, though close at hand, did not give him the least support. Villars, assailed in front, flank and rear, was taken and killed in cold blood, and, Fuentes, pursuing his advantage, routed the whole of the superior

army before him with tremendous slaughter.* The fall of Dourlens and Cambray followed, Balagny, in the latter place, showing a degree of weakness which tarnished his reputation for ever.†

Tidings of the first of these disastrous events reached Henry in Burgundy, and hastening back with incredible speed, he arrived at Amiens on the 15th October, in the hope of relieving Cambray; but that city had already fallen, and the Spaniards were marching from conquest to conquest.

The King immediately invested La Fere; but as his forces were scattered, he could only proceed by blockade; and the city made a long resistance. The war was still going on in Brittany, with various success, and no soldiers could be withdrawn from that province without the greatest danger. Nevers was dying, the Duke of Bouillon was not to be depended upon, Villars had been killed before Dourlens, and the troops which these generals had raised were, in most instances, dispersed, with the exception of such as were absolutely necessary for the defence of the principality of Sedan. In the

* Letter of M. Lafont. Sully. The loss of the royalists, especially in noblemen, exceeded the whole amount of loss in the battles of Arques, Ivry, and Coutras.

† We find, from the Memoirs of the League, that a mutiny existed in the garrison; but the general opinion of historians attributes the loss of Cambray to the weakness of the commander.

same year, also, D'Aumont was killed before the small town of Comper, so that few of the old officers who had gained experience in the wars of the League, were left to command the armies of the King.

In Paris the plague broke out in the middle of the year, and spread desolation through the city; several corps of the army also became affected; and it was dangerous to keep any large bodies of men together. Under these circumstances, had the Spaniards, instead of dispersing their troops in winter quarters, pursued the war to the close of the year 1595, with the same energy which they displayed at the commencement, the difficulties of the King would have been serious, for the resources of the kingdom seemed to be totally exhausted. Both during a period of anarchy, in which every one pillaged the revenues of the crown at will, and during the slow restoration of tranquillity which succeeded the conversion of the King, when his enemies were to be purchased wholesale, the finances had fallen into a state of the utmost confusion, which those to whom they were entrusted, labored to increase and perpetuate, in order to continue the system of plunder, by which so many had enriched themselves. During the King's stay at Amiens, he made an attempt to establish a better system of administration, the result of which we shall see hereafter, but it was long before any thing effectual could be accomplished.

In the meantime, negotiations went on for the reconciliation of the Duke of Mayenne with his sovereign. His demands were greater, perhaps, than were justified by his position; but Gabrielle d'Estrées, who was now with the monarch, exerted all her influence to render him favorable to the Duke, and Henry consented, at length, to a treaty, by which it was declared, in regard to the death of Henry III., that, all things weighed, and the evidence examined, it appeared to the King, that the Princes and the Princesses of the League had taken no part in that crime. The Parliaments of the realm were consequently forbidden to proceed against them. Three places were given to the Duke in Burgundy and Champagne, as security for six years, the King burdened himself with the debts which Mayenne had contracted during the war, and a term of six weeks was granted to the other Leaguers, who were still in arms, to give in their adhesion to the treaty of peace.

This having been settled, and Mayenne feeling deeply the clemency of the monarch, who had thus, in fact, loaded him with favors, when he had nothing to expect but disgrace and punishment, set out to make his submission, in person, to the King, who was then at Monceaux with the fair Gabrielle. When he arrived, Henry was in the beautiful park of that place, attended only by Sully, and on his approach, the monarch advanced to meet him. Mayenne knelt before the King, and embraced his knees, assuring him of his fidelity for the future,

and thanking him for having delivered him "from the arrogance of the Spaniards, and the cunning of the Italians." The King then hastened to raise him, and embraced him three times, with the utmost cordiality, after which, taking him by the hand, and changing the subject, he led him through the park, pointing out the changes and improvements he intended to make. The King walked with his usual rapid pace; Mayenne, who had become excessively fat, and was troubled both with gout and sciatica, followed with difficulty, panting, limping, and growing red in the face. With good humored malice, Henry continued this exercise for some time, whispering to Sully, "If I walk this great body much longer, I shall avenge myself without much trouble;" and then turning to Mayenne, he added, "Tell the truth, cousin, do I not go somewhat fast for you?" The Duke replied that he was ready to expire.

"There is my hand," replied the King, embracing him again, "take it; for on my life this is all the vengeance that I shall ever seek."*

* This interview is fixed by l'Etoile on the 31st January, 1596. It must be remarked, that Sully, who, in his Memoirs, frequently confounds the order of events, and places them without dates, mentions the submission of Mayenne, and his visit to the King long after the fall of La Fere. He had evidently forgotten, at the time he dictated his great work, the exact period at which many events took place, and he implies distinctly that the interview between Mayenne and the King was subsequent to the attack upon Arras. Auvigni, in his life of Mayenne, is more accurate.

Such conduct was not without its effect, and a number of other noblemen took advantage of the King's generosity, to make their peace upon favorable terms. The Duke of Nemours had died of the same disease which had carried off Charles IX., but his brother, who had succeeded, now submitted to Henry, as did likewise the Duke of Joyeuse, who received the baton of Marshal of France. By their subjection, the whole country, with the exception of Marseilles in the south, and Brittany in the west, returned to obedience; but during the course of the same year, an insurrection of the inhabitants of Marseilles, against those who had usurped the government of the city, placed it at the command of Henry; and Mercœur obtained an extension of the truce, which, though it left him in possession of a considerable part of Brittany, enabled the King, in the commencement of 1596, to act somewhat more vigorously against the Spaniards.

In the month of March, Henry began to assemble his forces at St. Quentin, in order to carry on the siege of La Fere in person; but the Cardinal Archduke, who had now assumed the Government of the Netherlands, contrived to throw supplies into the place, and La Fere still held out for some time. Surrounded on every side by marshes and rivers, it was scarcely possible for the King to avail himself of the same means which might be employed against other places. At the same time the Archduke loudly declared, that sooner than suffer it to be compelled

to surrender by famine, he would risk a battle under its walls, and with this apparent intention he collected an army of fifteen thousand foot, and four thousand horse, at Valenciennes. Henry allowed himself to be deceived; and gathering around him all the forces of Picardy, he prepared to advance against the enemy. But the Archduke, to the surprise of the King, suddenly turned upon Calais, made himself master, in a few days, of the forts in the neighborhood, and invested the city in the middle of April.* Henry, at the head of his cavalry, instantly marched from La Fere to Boulogne, and made several desperate efforts to throw himself into Calais, in which town he knew that the greatest disorder existed amongst the garrison, and much

* Several curious particulars regarding the siege of Calais, by the Spaniards, are given by the Duke of Sully, but there is only one of his statements to which I think it necessary here to call the reader's attention, as, if it be true, Henry committed one of the most serious military errors that a King and a General could fall into. The Duke says that Henry, on his return from Burgundy, after the victory gained by Fuentes, passed by Moret, where he, Sully, had an interview with the monarch. He goes on to mention, that Henry, on that occasion, showed much regret at having declared war against Spain, and was deeply affected by the loss of so many important towns, but above all, by that of Calais, which was looked upon as already captured, though such was not yet the case. Now Calais was not invested by the Archduke till April, 1596, and Henry returned from Burgundy in the middle of October, 1595, so that he had full time to ensure Calais against attack, if he had considered it even probable that the Archduke would turn his arms against that city.

disaffection amongst the people. He embarked twice for that purpose, but he was driven back by contrary winds, and the town was taken before his eyes. Without raising the siege of La Fere, the monarch was unable to keep the field against the Spaniards; and Guisnes and Ardres were likewise captured. As some compensation, La Fere was, at length, forced to surrender on the 16th of May, 1596; the Spanish garrison demanding no hostages of the King for the execution of the capitulation, saying, that they knew him to be a prince of generosity and good faith, and were contented to trust to his word.

The fall of Calais greatly alarmed the English, who had been somewhat slow and negligent in sending aid to the King of France, since his conversion to the Roman Catholic faith. Coldness and estrangement had been manifest on the part of Elizabeth, from the moment that Henry renounced the Protestant religion. An offensive and defensive treaty, which had been proposed between England, Holland, and France, had remained unconcluded. But the English Queen at length perceived the disastrous results of such policy, and at the same time sought to turn the dangers of her ally to her own advantage. Wishing to regain possession of a town, which had been so long in the hands of England, she is reported to have insinuated, some time before the city surrendered, that she would agree to defend Calais against the Spaniards, if Henry would

give it up to her. The French monarch replied, that he would rather be plundered by his enemies than his friends, and Elizabeth, offended by his refusal, suffered her ally to lose the city without giving him any assistance.

To carry on the negotiations for a stricter alliance with the Court of London, as well as to remove from France, for a time, a man whose designs were known to be dangerous, the Duke of Bouillon was now sent into England. The long pending treaty was ultimately concluded, and an English fleet put to sea, but without giving any substantial aid to the King of France.

Though Henry undoubtedly felt bitterly the loss of Calais, yet he neither allowed his courage to be depressed, nor the slightest sign of dejection on his part to weigh down the energies of his friends or raise the hopes of his enemies. When after many efforts to succor the place, he at length heard of its surrender; he turned to the noblemen of his court, saying with a calm air, "Well, my friends, there is no remedy. Calais is taken, and even in some degree disastrously; but we must, nevertheless, neither suffer ourselves to be confounded nor lose courage, since it is in the midst of afflictions that valiant men become more resolute, and strengthen themselves with new hopes. It is common in war to gain at one time and lose at another; our enemies have had their turn; and with the aid of God, who has never deserted me when I have

prayed to him with all my heart, we shall have ours. In any case, one thing consoles me greatly, which is, that there has been no want on my part; and I do not think that I have omitted any thing within my power to succor my friends and servants. I am willing to believe, too, that all who have been employed for that purpose have worthily and loyally acquitted themselves. Thus, we must not give way to complaint and murmuring, nor cast blame or reproach upon any. On the contrary, let us do honor to the memory of the dead; let us not refuse the praise due to the generous defence made by the living; and let us apply ourselves to seek out the means of taking, with usury, our revenge upon the enemy, so that, with the favor of Heaven, this place may remain in the hands of the Spaniards only as many days as our ancestors left it years in possession of the English."

If these were not Henry's exact words, one thing is very clear, that neither the style, nor the character of thought was that of Sully, by whom the speech is reported; and all that we know of Henry justifies us in believing, that the language attributed to him by his minister, is substantially that which he employed on this occasion.

But the fall of Calais implied far more than the loss of a mere seaport. The submission of the people, the tranquillity of the kingdom, the stability of the throne itself, depended much upon the monarch's reputation. The most ordinary of all

popular vices is to look upon the successful man with reverence, and to regard the unsuccessful with contempt. Such a reverse as the loss of Calais instantly affected the vulgar of all ranks. Some busied themselves in seeking causes for the disaster, and attributed it to the negligence of the King, whose connexion with the fair Gabrielle always afforded a pretext for charging him with giving up his time to his mistress, at the expense of the State. Some, looking upon his fortune as declining, and his power shaken, strove to raise up new factions in the country, or to take advantage of their sovereign's difficulties to extort concessions to their own personal ambition.

"The people," says l'Etoile, "which is in itself an obstinate, inconstant, and volatile animal, now began to speak ill of the king, just in proportion as praises had been bestowed on him before;" and the following statement of Sully's will show to what a pitch the criminal designs of a great body of the French nobles had attained. It must be remarked in the first place, however, that at all times during the civil wars, from a very early period, schemes had been entertained by factious leaders, on both sides, of dismembering the kingdom, in order to form independent sovereignties for themselves, or of subjecting it to general partition. The termination of the weak line of Valois, and the vigorous character of Henry IV. had intimidated the ambitious framers of such designs; but no

sooner did a reverse befall him than the same plans revived in a new shape; and the Duke of Montpensier was chosen by a large body of nobles to suggest to the King, as a measure tending to the general security of the realm, the subdivision of France into great feofs, the existing governors of provinces, and one or two other distinguished noblemen, to hold the same by liege homage and military service. Montpensier represented to the King that, by this arrangement, a large body of feudal troops, each vassal's contingent being fixed beforehand, would be always at the disposal of the crown, in case of any great reverse, like that which had just occurred; and he endeavored to show from history that the system had proved beneficial to former monarchs.

It is hardly possible to suppose that Henry could listen to a proposal for the revival, at the end of the sixteenth century, of the feudal system of the twelfth, without some degree of merriment, as well as much pain. Pain, however, must have been greatly predominant; for a more striking evidence could not be given of the disorganization of the very principles of society in France, than that such an idea should be entertained for a moment amongst any body of reasonable and educated men.

The King listened calmly and temperately to the long discourse of the Duke, and when he had concluded replied, without the slightest appearance of anger, "My cousin and friend, I do believe that

some evil spirit has bewitched yours, or that you are not in your right senses: for the language which you have just used is entirely unbecoming in a worthy man, and one of a good disposition like yourself, and so completely out of character with the station of a Prince of my blood, who is even now nearer to the crown than I was formerly, that I think, while listening to you, I am in a dream. Moreover, I hardly believe that views, so full of insult to me and so pernicious to the State, can have had birth in a character so amiable as I have always observed in you. Can you imagine that people who are wicked enough thus to take advantage of your guileless and easy nature, would, after having stripped me of the principal and most magnificent rights of royalty, subsequently respect in you the rights of a Prince of the blood. I will not conceal from you that, if I believed you to have in your heart desires so degrading to you and to me, as those which I have heard come forth from your mouth, I would make you know, that a truly royal heart is not to be offended so cruelly without punishment and without long penitence. However, my cousin, and my friend return to yourself, and withdraw altogether from the precipice of such wandering fancies. Take great care, nevertheless, not to show those who have employed you in so bad a work, that you have spoken to me thereof in any shape; but feigning that the above reasons have presented themselves to your mind, tell them that

they have not only prevented you from mentioning the subject to me, but also have given you so great a horror of the proposition, that you are resolved to hold him as a mortal enemy who shall ever speak of it again."

Montpensier, touched and ashamed, besought his sovereign's pardon, and following his directions to the letter, dissolved one of the most dangerous conspiracies which had been formed since the accession of Henry IV. Little doubt existed, it would appear, amongst the King's most attached friends, that Bouillon was the prime mover in this ambitious attempt of the French nobles, as well as in many schemes having a similar tendency; and his departure from the court was hailed by those who sincerely wished well to the monarch and the State as a deliverance from one whose sole object was his own aggrandizement, who served without affection, and was negligent by design.

After the taking of Ardres, the Archduke retreated into Flanders; and a contagious disease having spread through the French army, Henry, without money to pay his troops, or provisions to support them, was obliged to disperse his forces, and abandon the campaign before its natural termination.

Pestilence and famine had by this time extended themselves to most of the provinces of France; and the capital itself suffered severely from both. The price of wheat in Paris had risen to nearly five times its ordinary height; and the influx of poor from the

surrounding districts was so great, that between six and seven thousand were known to enter the gates in one day. Sleeping in the public squares, burial grounds, and market-places, during the night, and begging from house to house during the day, they became infected in multitudes by the plague, and communicated it to others in turn. Although no one was, in those days, sufficiently stolid or theoretical to doubt the infectious nature of the disease, in opposition to the evidence of daily experience, the measures adopted by the authorities of the city were, in many instances, calculated rather to spread the malady to places still healthy, than to circumscribe its range, and diminish its intensity. The multitude of mendicants who had flocked into the capital were driven out again into the country, after a sojourn of some weeks within the walls; and wherever they turned their steps the plague accompanied them. Although means were employed to prevent the clothes of the dead from being hawked about for sale, as was then customary, yet no general order was given for destroying, at once, garments which were known to be infected.

All those meteorological accidents too, which favor the diffusion of infection, by predisposing the human frame to receive it, occurred during the spring and summer of 1596. "We had summer in April," says the chronicler, "autumn in May, and winter in June."

As usual, the disease showed itself in its severest form at the commencement; and the poorest quarters of the town were first attacked; but ere its virulence was in the slightest degree abated, it seized upon the wealthy and the great, and showed that in this instance, as in others, "Pallida mors equo pulsat pede, pauperum tabernas, regumque turres." The pestilence first appeared in the month of February, and in April and May raged with such fury, that, in the former month, more than six hundred persons died in the Hotel Dieu. No remedy was found which seemed to have the slightest influence on the disease; and at first, every person attacked fell a victim, the period varying from a few hours to four or five days. In August, however, the intensity of the infection, and the severity of the malady, both diminished, but the pestilence did not entirely cease for many months; and it was remarked, that immediately after a severe thunder-storm, which visited Paris in the commencement of September, the number of fresh cases was as great, and the deaths as frequent, as in the very height of the plague.

While the epidemic was still raging in its most violent form, Henry disbanded his army, to which the contagion had already spread, and prepared to return to Paris, where his life was every hour in more danger from the knife of the assassin, than from the pestilence. In the month of March, a pretender to the crown had appeared, who was

charged with entertaining designs against the life of the King. It is probable, that had he confined himself to putting forth an absurd claim, his offence would have been treated with lenity, and seclusion in a monastery, or an hospital, might have been the due reward of his folly.

The name by which he had always been known was Charles la Ramée; and at the time when an evident aberration of intellect led him to aspire to the crown, he was between twenty-three and twenty-four years of age. His appearance was noble and majestic; and as far as his history has been traced, it is as follows, although, it must be remarked, that some of the principal facts rest upon his own statements, which contemporary writers have assumed to be accurate, without apparently any very minute investigation. His reputed father, whose name he had received, and by whom he had been educated, was a gentleman of Brittany, residing on his own estates, at the distance of about three leagues from Nantes. No doubt had been entertained by the young man himself, or by any of the neighboring families, that he was the son of Monsieur de la Ramée, till on his deathbed that gentleman declared, in the presence of his children, that such was not the case, and that his pretended son Charles was the child of Charles IX., having been sent into Brittany by Catherine de Medicis, to be educated in secret. The dying man added, that the Queen-mother had exacted a pro-

mise from him, that the secret of the child's birth should not be divulged till after her own death, and that of all her sons; which engagement he had more than faithfully kept, as Henry III. had been assassinated six years before the tale was told. M. de la Ramée bequeathed nothing to his adopted child, but arms and a horse, with which he set forth to seek his fortune. It would appear he first visited Paris, where the pretensions he now began to put forward attracted the attention of a lady of high birth, connected with the League, (probably Madame de Montpensier) who sent for, and conversed with him in private. But she soon discovered that his understanding could not be depended upon, and she cast him off at once without ceremony. He then turned his steps to Rheims, where he began to spread the account of his supposed birth in private, and gained some partizans, principally amongst the women of the place, who supplied him with money and clothes. Slight as was this success, it raised his hopes and his presumption, and he proceeded to give further evidence of his royal descent, by touching persons afflicted by the king's evil. In curing, by this simple process, persons affected by one of the most formidable of all the maladies to which man is subject, he was probably as successful as any sovereign before him. At all events, he found persons to bear witness to his miraculous powers. Not satisfied with royalty, he aimed at or imagined

inspiration. He dreamed dreams, he received revelations, he obtained the visitations of an angel. His discourse became proud and menacing; and he pretended to have inherited from his father, Charles IX., an inextinguishable hatred of his Calvinistic countrymen. L'Etoile, who had the best means of ascertaining his proceedings at this time, declares that he even went so far as to demand unction as king, at the Cathedral of Rheims. Henry was informed of his pretensions while directing the operations against La Fere; but the monarch merely laughed at his insignificant rival, saying that he had come somewhat too late, and that such claims should have been put in before the battle of Arques. The authorities of Rheims, however, took a more serious view of the case; caused the pretender to be arrested, and brought him to trial. He maintained in prison, and before his judges, the same haughty tone which he had hitherto assumed, asserted his right to the throne of France, and was condemned, apparently as much upon his own testimony as that of the witnesses against him. Besides the charge of sedition, he was accused of seeking the life of the King; and the judges of Rheims pronounced sentence of death upon him. But Ramée appealed to the superior tribunals of Paris, and the cause and the prisoner were removed to the capital.

His fate, however, was only delayed; for after a patient hearing of his case by the Parliament of

Paris, the sentence of the inferior court was confirmed, and he was accordingly hung in the Place de Grèvé, on the 8th of March, 1596. In the pretensions of this unfortunate young man there was probably more of madness than of crime; and not the slightest proof has ever been brought forward that he was even the natural son of Charles IX., yet, such is the force of imagination, that multitudes of those who visited him in prison, came away convinced, upon no other grounds than his personal appearance, that his claim to royal descent, at least, was well founded. Even the sage and moderate l'Etoile admits that such was the case with himself; and, in speaking of his death, ventures to use the same language which he would have employed to designate an acknowledged child of his sovereign. "His discourse," he says, "seemed a hallucination of the mind which sent him to death, though in any other time it would have been chastised by confinement in some *monkery*, which appeared a sufficient punishment for this poor maniac, had it not been that the *royalties* of the League were then quite fresh. Such was the cause of *a son of France* being seen that day in the Grève."

As the barbarous custom of requiring the reigning monarch to sign the death-warrant of a prisoner did not exist in France, Henry was spared the pain of taking any part in the proceedings against this unhappy young man; but he did not exercise the great privilege of showing mercy, and it is probable that,

absent from the capital, he was not even consulted in regard to the execution of the sentence. The laws of France at that time were exceedingly sanguinary, even more so than those of England. The true objects of punishment seemed entirely lost sight of; and no one thought of correcting an offender or of deterring the people from offences. The laws were as criminal as the acts they punished; and to wring forth the confession of suspected crimes by agony, the infliction of which even established guilt could not justify, or to aggravate the pangs of death for offences proved by evidence, or admitted under torture, seemed the great aim of those who were appointed to administer justice. Henry himself was undoubtedly disposed in all cases to lenity, and was at all times merciful in instances of wrong done or attempted against himself; but it was judged necessary to put down the practice of private assassination by severity, especially where the person of the monarch was daily an object of attack. The minds of kings too, as those of individuals, wear the habits of the age and country in which they live, and salutary modifications, not total changes, are all that can be fairly expected of any sovereign.

In the space of twelve months we find that three men were executed for having devised the death of the King. The first and most distinguished of these persons was an advocate of Angers; but in regard to his trial, and the evidence produced

against him, we have no statements, which enter into any minute details. The second was an Italian, who had been arrested in France, and by whom, it would seem, more than one attempt had been made to take the life of Henry. In his confession we are assured, that he incriminated the Cardinal Archduke, governor of the Low Countries, as the instigator of the design; and it seems certain, that, whatever was the nature of his services, he received monthly wages from that prince. Henry saw him and examined him himself, having a suspicion that this was not the first plot against his life, in which the prisoner had been engaged. It proved that the King's memory was accurate; for the man acknowledged, that some time before he had held the stirrup of the monarch's horse, while he mounted to march against the troops of the Constable of Castile in Franche Comté. Upon that occasion the assassin, fearful of committing the act with his own hand, in the presence of so many of Henry's attendants and followers, attempted to persuade the French sovereign to lead a part of his forces to the attack of a small fortress, which he represented as nearly without a garrison and easily to be captured. The council of the King had strongly opposed such a step; but Henry himself yielded to the man's persuasions, and sent a small body of cavalry to reconnoitre in the first instance. The detachment was drawn into an ambuscade, in which a hundred-and-twenty men were killed; and,

had the King been present in person there can be little doubt that he would either have fallen on the field, or become a prisoner in the hands of the enemy. No mercy was now shown to the traitor; and he was executed at Meaux on the 9th of September, 1596. Nevertheless, such due severity had little effect in deterring the malcontents of the party of the League; and a case followed soon after in January, 1597, where lenity would probably have been more appropriate. An unhappy man, by trade a joiner and upholsterer, was arrested for having uttered seditious words on the Christmas-eve preceding, while under the influence of too much wine; and, it having been proved, that he had been chafering with a cutler for a knife of a peculiar form, he was condemned on very insufficient evidence, and hanged in the Place de Grève.

The whole course of history shows, that the mind of man is susceptible of contagion, as well as the body; and moral epidemics are more frequent than is generally supposed. Every crime, it would appear, is more or less infectious, but that of assassination peculiarly so; and it becomes a question of considerable importance, whether the notoriety, given to such acts by public execution, does, or does not, like the exposure of a pestilent corpse, spread the contagion to multitudes of others. Were punishment an invariable consequence of even an attempted crime, apprehension, perhaps, might act as a specific medicine against the moral disease;

but so many instances of immunity occur under the very best and best administered laws, that the hopes of malefactors are greater than their fears; and scattered examples of retribution have little effect in deterring from the commission of crime. During the reign of Henry there can be no doubt that a multitude of schemes were contrived, and attempts made to take his life, which met with no punishment; and, though a vast number of assassins fell under the arm of the law, yet we have no reason to believe, that the terrors of their fate withheld even a single individual, so disposed, from following their example.

In the same month of January another pretender to the blood royal appeared in the person of a poor master of arts in the university; but, happily for himself, he added to his pretension of being a natural son of the Queen-mother by Charles of Bourbon, that he was suckled at the breast of the Virgin Mary, which probably saved him from the fate of the unhappy Ramée. It is not unlikely, also, that the thirst of blood about this time began to abate in the courts of the Parliament; for it is unfortunately too clearly proved by history, that the seat of justice itself is not free from those periodical influences which affect society in general, and that there is a fashion in severity and lenity as well as in matters of mere taste. It is certain, at all events, that in the course of 1596 public executions were much more frequent in Paris than in the succeeding year,

and that the hangman went hand in hand with pestilence and famine in decimating the population of the city.

Though surrounded by cases of plague and exposed to a most unwholesome atmosphere in the neighborhood of La Fere, Henry maintained his health during the short campaign of 1596; but a strange accident had nearly deprived France of her king in the month of January in that year. His sister and the rest of the court had accompanied him into Picardy; and the Princess of Navarre having been seized with illness, which confined her to her bed, Henry went to see her, carrying in his arms his infant son by the fair Gabrielle d'Estrées. While he was standing beside her, either alone, or with very few persons present, the flooring of the room, from some cause, which has never been explained, gave way. The King instantly cast himself and the child upon his sister's bed, in the hope, probably, of breaking their fall; but strange to say, that portion of the floor remained firm, while all the rest was precipitated into the rooms below; and neither Henry, his sister, nor his child sustained the slightest injury.

Immediately after the capitulation of La Fere, he hastened back to Paris to meet the Cardinal Legate, Alexander de Medicis, a man selected with greater judgment than the Popes had hitherto displayed in the choice of their ministers to France. Mild, peaceful, and prudent, he gave the greatest

satisfaction to the King, and to the whole Court, though the distinction with which Henry treated him, alarmed the jealousy of the Protestants, who never failed to take the most unfavorable moments for urging their claims upon the King. One of the undertakings which the Pope had entrusted to the management of the Cardinal, was that of bringing about a treaty of peace between France and Spain, and the Legate applied himself to that purpose with the utmost zeal and ability. Nor was the King of Spain unwilling to listen to overtures on the subject, for he was sensible of the daily diminution of his corporeal powers, and saw the probability of his vast dominions being soon left in the hands of a young and inexperienced Prince.

Negotiations were consequently commenced, the result of which I shall have occasion to notice hereafter; but while they were proceeding, the utter derangement of the finances of France, and the total want of money in which Henry was kept, compelled him to have recourse to extraordinary means for remedying an evil, which had already endured too long. During the reign of Henry III. the royal treasury had been exhausted, not only by the civil contentions of the country, but by the extravagance and weakness of the King. His dissolute companions were raised to the highest offices in the State, without the slightest consideration of the qualities requisite; and amongst others, Francis d'O, Lord of Fresnes and Maillebois, was named

Superintendent of Finance, the most important post in the realm. Notwithstanding his notorious infidelity in the discharge of his functions, his equally notorious vices, and his thinly concealed enmity towards Henry IV. himself, the difficulties which surrounded that monarch on his accession to the throne had forced him to retain the Superintendent in his post; and during the whole of that minister's administration, his object seems to have been, to wring as much from the people, and to yield as little to the State, as possible. Every thing in his hands became venal, all the subordinate offices were filled by those who bid the highest for them, either in money or in complaisance; the accounts of the treasury were purposely brought into a state of inextricable disorder; and while the subject was oppressed, and the State pillaged, a system was established, both of collecting and dispensing the revenue, the only object of which was to favor malversation and conceal fraud. Worn out with debauchery, however, d'O expired in Paris on the 24th October, 1594, leaving behind him nothing but debts, and a name covered with opprobrium; and the office of Superintendent was eagerly sought by several competitors. Of these, the only very prominent person was Monsieur de Sancy, who had served both Henry III., and his successor, with great zeal and fidelity. The levy of a large body of men in Switzerland, at his own expense, had delivered the former of those monarchs from much peril and difficulty,

and the declaration in favor of Henry IV., which he obtained from the Swiss troops at the moment of the King's accession, had tended greatly to fix the crown upon his Sovereign's head. He was a man of considerable abilities, and of devoted attachment, but vacillating in opinion, and not always very clear in judgment. He was more a man of talent than a man of sense; and though he succeeded on some occasions by decision and skill, he was more competent to form great projects, and execute hazardous enterprises, than to combat serious difficulties, or overcome long and numerous obstacles. Sully hardly does him justice, and Aubigné libelled him grossly; but few can doubt, who have minutely examined his own statements, that Henry would not have acted wisely to trust the sole superintendence of his finances to Monsieur de Sancy. It unfortunately happened, indeed, that other causes, besides the consideration of his incompetence, combined therewith to exclude him from the office to which he aspired, and these were of course put forward by the vanity of De Sancy, and the malice of a Court, as the sole motives which induced the sovereign to withhold the vacant place from one who had served him so faithfully. In his habit of jesting he was accustomed to spare no one, we find; and the fair Gabrielle was frequently the object of his bitter remarks, and, if Sully is to be credited, of his indecent calumny. Sancy admits

himself* that on one occasion he made a reply to her in the King's presence, unbecoming a man and a gentleman; and he states that she never forgave the offence, as he had little right to expect she would. After some hesitation, however, and it is generally supposed by the advice of his mistress, the monarch determined to suppress the office of Superintendent, at least for the time, and to entrust the management of the finances to a council of gentlemen, under the presidency of the Duke of Nevers, of which body Sancy formed a part. But the cumbrous machine thus constructed, produced no beneficial result; the various persons of whom it was composed brought into the council their bad as well as their good qualities; and after many magnificent promises, without fruit, it became evident to all that some other plan must be adopted. A new council was formed, shortly before the battle of Fontaine Françoise, with more extensive functions, and Sully was named one of the members, notwithstanding the vehement opposition of his future colleagues; but the same spirit reigned in this as in the former body. Confusion, irregularity, and peculation, still pervaded the whole system, and Sully was ultimately forced to retire to his country house, rather than take part in proceedings so detrimental to the service of the King. His absence only encouraged the members of the Council of Finance to lose all

* Mem. de Villeroy, tom. v. p. 95.

sense of common decency. Under the borrowed names of various contractors, they purchased the supplies needed by the army and the King's household, at the lowest possible price, and carried them into account against the crown at double or treble the actual cost. They compounded with the foreign troops for their arrears of pay, and charged the King with the full amount; and while their houses displayed the most extravagant luxury and splendor, their sovereign was often actually without food, or decent clothing. "I have seen him," says a contemporary, speaking of Henry, "with a plain pourpoint of white stuff, all soiled by his cuirass, and torn at the sleeve, and with well worn breeches, unsown on the side of the sword belt."*

The monarch's private letters to his long tried friend Sully, were full of bitter complaints against his financiers; and at length he determined to restore him to the Council from which he had now retired for some time, and to support him with his whole authority. The execution of this prudent resolution, though strongly pressed by Gabrielle d'Estrées, was for a time postponed by the intrigues of the Council, who found means to persuade the King, that the subject of finance was one which required longer experience than Sully possessed; but a case of fraud, so gross that it could not easily escape the eye of Henry, having been discovered

* Le Grain.

by him, he cast himself once more into the arms of that great minister, and soon had cause to regret, that he had not supported him from the first with the firmness due to his zeal and intelligence.

The revenues of the crown of France at that period proceeded from a vast variety of sources, and the method of collecting them was one which opened the door wide to all those practices which I have already noticed. The kingdom was divided into a number of portions, called generalties, the receipts from which were farmed out to certain contractors, under whom were a whole host of receivers and controllers, appointed by the Crown, and over whom were the treasurers, the intendants, and the Council of Finance. It is probable that from this system, which was so complicated in all its branches, as to render a detailed account of the whole organisation impossible in this place, a check might be expected upon the exactions of the Royal officers, and upon the frauds of the contractors; but the result was the direct reverse. The members of the council and their intendants received large gratuities from the farmers of the revenue, to let each particular district at a sum infinitely below its value; the great contractors apportioned their vast undertakings amongst sub-contractors, and both classes, in order to conceal their own iniquitous bargains, were obliged to connive at the frauds of the receivers and controllers, while the collectors were suffered to repay themselves for

their connivance by the most burdensome exactions from the people. Various circumstances combined together, to favor the concealment of the frauds thus perpetrated, and in the natural course of events, the evil went on, increasing in magnitude each succeeding year. Without taking into account the effects of a long civil war, which both exhausted the revenues of the country, and diverted many sums from the treasury never to be recovered, the fact of the monarch being frequently obliged to apply to the farmers of the revenue, to make advances upon their present or future contracts, and the habit of charging each particular source of revenue, with innumerable pensions and salaries to the officers of the crown in the district, and even to Princes of the blood, which were paid without the money passing through the Royal treasury, so complicated the accounts of the financiers, that it was hardly possible to ascertain the real value to a contractor, of any district he might obtain, and quite impossible, when every member of the Council, and all the subordinate officers, brought up in one school of peculation, were in league to deceive. It was less difficult, however, to arrive at some approximation to the truth; and when Henry suddenly found, at a time when his treasury was totally empty, and the declaration of war against Spain had involved him in expenses which required immediate supplies, that the receipts of the great and wealthy province of Nor-

mandy had been let for a sum of thirty thousand crowns, or ninety thousand livres, he became convinced that the evil, as Sully had often asserted, was more deeply rooted than he had imagined. He consequently examined further, and ascertained, that five of the principal districts of the kingdom were let at less than a fourth of their value. Having made this discovery, he at once recalled Sully to the Council of Finance, and by his recommendation, adopted a plan, by which some of the frauds in the collection, at least, were certain to be detected. The minister proposed, in the first instance, to visit several of the principal generalties of the kingdom, and personally to inquire into the state of the revenue, before the assembling of the Notables, who were by this time appointed to meet at Rouen. The King, however, modified the details of the scheme, and suggested to his Council, as from himself, the necessity of personal inspection. They eagerly approved of the proposal, thinking that to themselves alone, or to their agents, its execution would be entrusted, and that fresh opportunities of deceit and plunder would be afforded. But Henry made his own selection, appointed four masters of requests for six generalties, and gave up to the keen eyes of Sully alone, four other districts, of the greatest extent and importance. He furnished him likewise with full power to suspend, or dismiss, the Royal officers of finance in the provinces, who might resist the inquiry; and that nobleman set out at

once upon his important investigation. Every means were employed to frustrate his efforts in the provinces; every calumny was circulated at the Court to ruin him with the King. The Council of Finance, the treasurers of France, the receivers-general, the intendants, the collectors, the controllers, the registrars, the contractors, the sub-contractors, the very clerks, were in arms against him; but he steadily pursued his object, and in cases of resistance, first threatened, and then suspended, or discharged, the refractory officers, till the whole accounts of the districts were laid open before his eyes. A scene of iniquity and peculation was then discovered, which fully justified all his suspicions; and in the course of a few weeks he collected debts due to the crown, which amounted, even after all the salaries and pensions charged upon those provinces had been paid, to more than four hundred thousand crowns; although, when Henry had demanded, a short time before, the pitiful sum of eight hundred crowns, to enable him to surprise Arras, the Council of Finance had replied, that they could not furnish it, and hardly could find means to pay his household expenses. With this large supply in specie, Sully returned to the Court, and soon dissipated the calumnious accusations of his enemies.*

* I have given the above account of these transactions as they are stated by Sully, because I find that almost every historical source confirms him on one point or another; but I must remark, that in the printed copies (and perhaps in the manuscripts, for I have

It is not improbable that the discoveries he had made, and the vast augmentations of revenue which might be anticipated from better management, would have induced the King to refrain from calling together the Notables, for such assemblies had never been productive of any solid good, and were very often followed by evil consequences; but the time of meeting had been already fixed, and Sully only rejoined the King a few days before the members appeared in Rouen.

The assembly of the Notables was opened in great state in the month of October, 1596, and Henry, on the occasion, made one of those speeches, most eloquent without oratory, which are only to be found on the lips of men of great genius. The members labored zealously to meet the wishes of the King, and it was determined that the payment of the officers of the Crown should be deferred for one year, and that during two years, a tax of five per cent. should be levied upon all goods except corn, on their entrance into walled cities. A

not had the opportunity of comparing them,) there are either errors of the press, or of the copyist, in regard to different sums stated, and I believe in some places the word "ecus" has been substituted for "livres." Thus, in one passage, he says that he sent to the Swiss *ten thousand crowns*, which were due, and that Sancy, not knowing he had sent them, demanded *ninety thousand crowns*; but he afterwards expresses his indignation, that that minister should have required triple the sum owing to the Swiss. Now ninety thousand livres would have been exactly triple what was due.

council also, called the Council of Reason, was established, upon a plan which could not be followed out; and ultimately the whole management of the finances fell upon Sully, who soon reduced them to a better state, notwithstanding the opposition of the financiers.

Previous to the separation of the Royal army in 1596, Henry had left Biron to watch the banks of the Somme, and had strongly reinforced the garrisons of various frontier towns. Amiens, however, alleging its ancient privileges, had refused to receive the body of troops which he had destined for its protection, declaring that it could defend itself as it had hitherto done. Henry yielded, but the result was unfortunate; for the disorder and negligence which reigned in the town were so great, partly from the incapacity of the Governor and the turbulence of the inhabitants, and partly from the dismay which had been caused in the place, by a furious visit of the plague, that the Governor of Dourlens found it an easy prey in March, 1597. The method which he took to effect an entrance was ingenious; a cart filled with walnuts was sent into the town, and in passing the gates, one of the sacks became untied, and the fruit was scattered upon the ground. The soldiers of the guard immediately applied themselves to pick up the nuts; the traces of the cart were forthwith cut, so as to embarrass the gate; the Spanish soldiers, who were in the neighborhood, rushed in,

and the town was taken with scarcely any resistance. The King was horrified at this intelligence, and gave way to the most bitter lamentations. He had been spending some time in Paris in gaiety and merriment, with better hopes and prospects before him than he had ever yet enjoyed, but breaking away from such scenes at once, he exclaimed: "I have played the King of France long enough, it is time to play the King of Navarre again;" and mounting on horseback as speedily as possible,* he set out at the head of all the forces he could collect. Consternation and rejoicing spread through different classes in Paris; the loyal imagined that they already saw the enemy at their gates; the disaffected triumphed in the success of the Spaniards. The news, however, soon arrived, that Henry had invested the captured city, which enterprise he undertook contrary to the advice of his council, who foresaw innumerable obstacles.† The only great difficulty which presented itself to the mind of Henry, in the commencement of so important a siege, was the want of money. The sums collected in the autumn had been entirely exhausted in the payment of arrears, and the necessary expenses of the Government, and at this period of his history, the King was far poorer than most of

* L'Etoile says, the same day; but Sully shows that this was not the case. For some curious anecdotes of the Court at the time of the fall of Amiens, see note at the end of Book XIV.

† Perefix.

the private gentlemen in his dominions. He himself expresses to Sully, in a letter written either in 1596 or 1597, the state of his household, in terms which better explain his situation than those which any one else could employ. "I am very near the enemy," he writes, "and I have scarcely a horse upon which I could fight, or a suit of armour to put on. My shirts are all torn, my pourpoints in holes at the elbows; my pot is often empty, and these two last days I have dined with one or another, my purveyors telling me that they had no longer the means of supplying my table." Sully, however, found means to supply the funds, by measures savoring somewhat too strongly of despotism, and though the Parliament at first refused to register the edicts necessary for obtaining the money, Henry himself revisited Paris on the 12th of April, and going down to the courts, forced them to receive and publish his decrees.* During April the troops flocked from all parts of France to the royal army; in May the trenches were pushed forward rapidly; and in the course of June, forty-five pieces of artillery opened upon the walls. But the principal event of the siege was the effort made by the Cardinal Archduke to relieve the garrison. In the commencement of September he put his troops in motion, and arrived within sight of the town on the 15th of the

* I must once again warn the reader against the misstatements of Anquetil.

month; but before that time, the gallant Portocarero, to whom the capture of Amiens was owing, and who had hitherto conducted the defence with the utmost intrepidity, was killed by a ball in the side. The Archduke, nevertheless, continued his advance, and drove back a division of the Royal army in so much confusion, that the main body of the King's forces was thrown into disarray; but Henry speedily rallied his men, and opened a fire upon the enemy's troops, under which they dared not pursue their advantage. The next morning the King proceeded in person to reconnoitre their position, but found them already in retreat. Henry followed, and was inclined to force a battle, but was dissuaded from the attempt; and on the 25th, Amiens capitulated. During the course of the siege, two enterprises had been attempted upon Dourlens and Arras, neither of which proved successful. Henry, however, approached with his army in person to the gates of the latter town, after the fall of Amiens, and fired some cannon against the walls, in order to draw the Archduke into a battle; but that Prince remained inactive, and the King withdrew, observing that the Spaniards were strangely discourteous not to take one step to meet him.

The season was now too far advanced to undertake any considerable operation, and after having provided for the safety of the frontier, the King returned to Paris, occupied with the thought of reducing to obedience the only province which still

appeared in arms against him. Brissac was ordered to prepare the way in the commencement of the year; and on the 18th of February, 1598, Henry set out for Brittany, determined to inflict a severe chastisement upon Mercœur. The news of his march spread consternation amongst the Leaguers of that province, and a number of noblemen, who had obtained possession of many important towns, hastened to make their submission to Brissac. Nor was Mercœur himself without similar apprehensions, which caused him, as soon as Henry had arrived at Angers, to send his wife to that city for the purpose of negotiating with the King. The monarch at first showed little disposition to hear of any terms but those of absolute submission. Mercœur, however, found means to assail him on a weak point; and the marriage of his daughter with the King's natural son by Gabrielle d'Estrée, called at that time Cesar Monsieur, was the purchase of the monarch's pardon and favor. The two infants were immediately affianced at Angers; and Henry bestowed on the boy the Duchy of Vendome, whence he afterwards derived the title, by which he is known in history.

From Angers the King proceeded on a tour through Brittany, regulating the affairs of that province with great care and attention, and relieving the suffering people from bands of robbers in all classes of society, some of whom had carried on their system of plunder under the shape of tyran-

nical imposts, some upon the highway, at the point of the sword. Many towns which had been fortified were dismantled, and the garrisons discharged by the King; while Sully, who accompanied him, regulated the finance, and contrived to raise, without oppressing the lower orders, a sum of nearly four millions of crowns.

Nor were these the only affairs which occupied the monarch during his stay in Brittany. Before he left Paris, Vervins had been appointed as the place for holding a congress of ministers to treat of peace between France and Spain, under the mediation of the Cardinal Legate; and after a severe contest for precedence, the conferences had begun. But Elizabeth of England had seen with apprehension the approaching termination of the war; and as soon as she found that Henry was on his march for Brittany, she wrote to inform him that an English ambassador would visit him at Nantes, to treat with him on matters of importance. Scarcely had the King arrived in that city, when Robert Cecil and Justin of Nassau, appeared as the plenipotentiaries of England and the States of Holland; and offers were made, on the part of those two countries, well calculated to dazzle and seduce the King of France. The object, however, was clearly seen; and, though Elizabeth promised a force of six thousand foot and five hundred horse, maintained at the expense of the Queen, and Holland four thousand foot and a park of artillery, if Henry

would undertake to recover Ardres and Calais, the French King avoided the snare. He explained frankly and straightforwardly to the ambassadors, the situation in which he was placed, the objects which he had in view, the means by which he intended to obtain them, and he showed a minute knowledge of the policy of all the neighboring States; which, if we may believe Sully, surprised those who heard him, and moved them to admiration. He told them that the first blessing France required was repose, a proposition not easy to gainsay; and he dismissed them to their several countries with courtesy and thanks.

In the mean time the Protestants, irritated by his conversion and impatient of delay, had urged him violently and intemperately to grant them that complete religious equality with the Catholics, which would immediately have rekindled the civil war; and the arrival of envoys from Protestant States had given them a prospect of success. But the departure of Cecil and Nassau diminished their hopes, and rendered their demands more moderate. Henry himself, when the head of the Calvinistic party, had always declared that he would be satisfied with the edict of 1757, if it were strictly observed; but the Huguenot leaders now naturally expected something more from a monarch whom they had aided so powerfully to place upon the throne. Henry accordingly added their eligibility to offices in the courts of law, and in the department of

finance. All their rights as citizens were preserved to them; and if some shackles were placed upon their religious freedom, the burden was not very onerous. In every Parliament a court, composed of Protestants and Catholics, in equal numbers, was established; certain towns were left in the hands of the Huguenots, without being included in the edict, as places of security, and the Calvinistic clergy were paid from the royal treasury. Their convocations, or synods, were permitted under proper regulations, and they were allowed to exercise openly their religion, except in certain towns and districts, from which the King was bound by treaties to exclude it. They were, however, required to pay a decent reverence to the religion of their fellow subjects, and to yield obedience to the laws of the land, which both parties had too frequently infringed. Such was the famous edict of Nantes, which was signed on the 13th of April, 1598; but it was not verified by the Parliament till after the departure of the Cardinal Legate, whose Christian moderation and pacific character deserved a token of respect.

The Parliament of Paris made many difficulties; and papistical preachers from the pulpit breathed furious invectives and idle menaces; but Henry called the Courts before him, and in a speech full of dignity, kindness, and decision, insisted that the edict should be verified, without further opposition. I will quote but a few sentences of that long speech,

but they will be sufficient to show the feelings which pervaded it, and the tone in which they were expressed. "There must be no more distinction," the monarch said, "between Catholics and Huguenots. All must be good Frenchmen, and let the Catholics convert the Huguenots by the example of a good life. I am a Shepherd King, who will not shed the blood of his sheep, but seek to bring them together with kindness." He then noticed the means which had been used to intimidate him, and added, "I will root out all these factions, and punish those who foment them. I have overleaped the town walls, and I will easily overleap the barricades also." The edict was accordingly verified; and it was reserved for the grandson of this sovereign, a monarch as double as Henry was sincere, as ostentatious as he was simple, as bigotted as he was liberal, to deprive France of the benefits which the King now conferred.

Difficulties arose, likewise, on the part of the Protestants; many were discontented with the terms offered, and many were anxious to take any pretext for resisting a measure, which, by restoring internal tranquillity to France, swept away the opportunities that troublous times afford for the advancement of personal ambition. But Parabere and Langlois were sent to meet the Protestants in Poitou, and their arguments succeeded in gaining the adhesion of the Protestant consistory, which was held on the 3rd of August.

The flame of civil war was now totally extinguished, and nothing remained but a few lingering sparks, which were easily crushed out at an after time.

While Henry was making his successful progress through Brittany, the ambassadors of France and Spain continued their negotiations at Vervins, under the mediation of the Legate, and the ministers of Philip showed themselves much more eager to obtain peace than those of Henry. The first proposal included the restitution of all the towns taken by Spain, with the exception of Cambray, which had been so ungenerously acquired to France by the Duke of Alençon, and in which Balagny had exercised sovereignty. Some difficulties arose in regard to the Duke of Savoy: but it was agreed that the differences between the French King and the Duke should be referred to the decision of the Pope, and a treaty was signed between France and Spain on the basis of that of Cambray. While this act of pacification was under discussion, the Duke of Savoy recovered the valley of Maurienne, and defeated the French troops under Crequi with considerable slaughter. But immediately afterwards, Lesdiguieres took from the Duke a fort which he had built in the neighborhood of Grenoble; and the whole of Provence was restored to the power of the King. Thus ended the wars in which Henry had been engaged from his earliest years; the religious dissensions of France were terminated; and peace and repose were given to a

country which, with the greatest natural advantages, had been reduced to the most lamentable state of poverty and desolation, by nearly forty years of fierce and virulent civil contention, brought about by an attempt to violate the conscience, and control the faith of man.

The following extract from the journal of l'Etoile gives so curious a picture of the state of society in Paris, at the time of the capture of Amiens, that I have thought it expedient to insert it here, as it was too long to be placed at the foot of the page to which it refers:—

"On Wednesday, 5th, the baptism of the son of Monsieur, the Constable, was solemnized at the Enfans Rouges at Paris. He was held by the King and baptized by the Legate. Madame la Marquise was present, magnificently attired, dressed entirely in green; the King amused himself in ridiculing her head-dress, telling her there were not sufficient brilliants in her hair, for she had but twelve, and it was said fifteen were necessary. A splendid entertainment was given at the Hotel de Montmorenci, for which occasion all the cooks in Paris were employed for more than a week. There were two sturgeons at a hundred crowns each. All the fishes were very cleverly disguised as meats, they were for the most part sea-monsters, which had been brought expressly, from all parts. There was the worth of three hundred and fifty crowns of fruit, and of pears de bon chrétien, as many as could be found, at a crown each.

"Ballets, masquerades, music of all kinds, pantomimes, and all that could serve to allure to voluptuousness (unto which one gave way but too much without that), followed these fine festivities; for

"After feeding
The dance is needing."

In the depths of which amusements it seemed that we wished to bury all our griefs, warnings of the wrath of God, which immediately after fell upon us. On the Wednesday, the 12th of this month, the eve of Mid-Lent, whilst they were amusing themselves with laughing and dancing, the sad news arrived of the surprise of the city of Amiens, by the Spaniards, who had made scourges of our ballets to whip us, at which news, Paris, the court, the dance, and all the fête, were very much troubled; and even the King, whose firmness and magnanimity were not easily shaken, was as if stunned by this blow; but looking, nevertheless, to Heaven, which he did, generally, more in adversity than in prosperity, he said aloud these words:—"This blow is from Heaven! These poor people, by having refused a small garrison that I wished to give them are ruined." Then thinking a little, he said, "I have played the King of France long enough, it is time to play the King of Navarre." Turning towards his mistress, who was weeping, he said, "My mistress, we must quit our arms and mount our horses, in order to carry on another sort of war;" which he did the same day, marching the first, at the head of his troops, to show that fear lodged not in his soul, and could not find place in his heart. He behaved with great resolution in this adversity; which served very much to reassure the people, and to incite the nobility to fight well, and be firm under the conduct of so brave and generous a king. This difficulty might have been easily avoided, if he, amongst others, had believed the counsel of the Duke of Mayenne, who, a long time before, had advised him to go to Amiens, and leave the fair of St. Germains and the ballets of Paris, as he had had information, from good authority, that there was an enterprise on foot against one of the principal cities of Picardy. But God, who wished to humiliate and awaken him, and also to chastise the people, who were well deserving this punishment, suffered not these good counsels to have any effect.

"Madame la Marquise, much frightened, (more from conscience than any thing else) was quicker than the King, and set out an

hour before him in her litter, saying she did not feel herself safe in Paris during the King's absence.

"After the departure of his Majesty they assembled the chambers of the Parliament, and the same was done at the Hotel de Ville. Many fine propositions were made at both places, but no resolution was arrived at. The priests in their sermons do not speak of Amiens but fall upon the Huguenots, who, for all that, do not cease to meet at the house of the Princess, where the public service is performed, with additional prayers for the good journey and prosperity of the King. The Leaguers rejoice, but with little noise, as it is talked of driving them out."

I find appended to the above account, by l'Etoile, a note, which shows how rapidly and unceremoniously human life was sacrificed by the criminal law of France at that time. The commentator on the journal of the reign of Henry IV. says:—

"After the report of the surprise of the city of Amiens, those who remained in Paris of the faction of the Sixteen, and above all, among the people, began to hold meetings. Several were found at a cabaret in the rue de la Huchette, who, having placed themselves in a private room, after having spoken of affairs of state, according as they thought of them, and said many things in praise of Spain, naming the citizens still in Paris, whom they believed took part in the union, they all drank to the health of King Philip, saying one to the other, 'Long live the King of Spain.' But this amusement finished in sadness, for the Prêvot, Rapin, came out of an adjoining room, where he had hid himself with his archers, and seized them all. Five were hanged the next day in the Place de Gréve, two others three days after at the gate of Paris, and the rest were banished."

BOOK XVI.

THE most interesting portion of the life of Henry IV. is past, and that which remains to be related, though it may show high qualities of heart and mind, must display many traits of weakness; and, while it offers a pleasing picture of the restoration of a great country to prosperity, by the labors of a wise and benevolent monarch, must afford the sad contrast of bitter ingratitude on the part of many of his subjects, and of the struggles of selfish ambition, and unreasonable prejudices against the noblest designs, and the most prudent measures.

The treaty of peace, concluded at Vervins, was not published in Paris for a month after its signature, and Biron was sent to Brussels to witness the ratification by the Archduke. The malice of the enemies of the King did not cease with their efforts in arms, and the stay of Biron in Brabant was an opportunity which they did not neglect, to inspire the heart of a haughty, violent, and ambitious man, with treasonable projects against his sovereign. Before he set out on his mission, Henry had raised him to the Dukedom, as a reward for his services; but the honors bestowed upon the Marshal were far below the price which he put upon the exertions

he had made in the royal cause; and his petulant vanity, which had more than once led him into painful discussions with his placable sovereign, soon after conducted him to treason, discovery, and death.

Not long after the publication of the peace, Philip II. terminated a reign of tyranny, by a loathsome and unusual death. By a partition which he made of his territories, at his decease, he bestowed the dominion of the Low Countries upon his daughter, the Infanta Isabella, and gave her hand to the Archduke Albert. His illness, however, prevented him from swearing to observe the treaty of Vervins, according to the form required, and that duty was left to his successor.

The first efforts of Henry were directed to restore security and prosperity to his people; and in order to check the licence which had so long existed, he strictly forbade all his subjects, except his guards, to carry fire-arms. He greatly reduced the number of his troops; and even the ancient forces of the crown, which had been augmented during the civil wars, were likewise diminished. The governors of provinces, and the lieutenants of the King, were deprived of the guard which had hitherto been allowed them; and Henry mitigated the weight of taxation, acquitting the people of all arrears still due. At the same time, as he well knew that a number of persons, under the pretence of nobility, had exempted themselves from the tax

called the *taille*, thus defrauding the revenue, and causing the burden to press unjustly upon others, he caused a strict examination to be made into all suspected cases, and such persons as had fraudulently escaped the impost, were forced, for the future, to submit.

In the month of October, 1598, he was seized with a severe illness, which threatened his life, and the love and confidence, which he had already obtained amongst his people, were proved by the consternation, which the report of his danger produced throughout the whole country. While looking forward to death, he assured his attendants that he entertained no fear of the great passage to another world; but he expressed deep regret at being called away from the scene of his exertions, before he had restored his country to a complete state of prosperity. The fever was subdued, however, the other inconveniences, from which he suffered, removed, and he soon after returned from Monceaux to St. Germain, where he labored indefatigably with Sully, for the restoration of the finances to a flourishing condition, for the alleviation of the burdens upon his people, and for the payment of the debts of the state. At the same time, knowing the inefficiency of sumptuary edicts, to restrain the luxury of the wealthy and the ostentatious, he endeavored, by example, to effect that which could not be obtained by laws. The most rigid economy was established in his own

household, and at his own table; his dress was the most simple that it is possible to conceive; and he usually appeared habited in a plain, straight-cut pourpoint of silk or taffeta, without lace or slashings, and a grey or brown cloak.

All the activity and energy which he had displayed in his military career, were now applied to the business of the state; and he held daily conferences with his council, in which we are assured by Sully, he showed a degree of keenness, vigorous sense, information, and experience, which astonished the old politicians and financiers, by whom he was surrounded. Sully himself aided the King with all his own great abilities, and incessant industry. Infinite difficulties, however, which it would be tiresome and useless to detail, were thrown in the way of the King, and his minister, by those who had so long prospered by the plunder of the state, and the oppression of the people. But the pertinacity of the great monarch and the great statesman overcame all resistance; and a considerable effect was produced by a regulation proposed by Henry himself, to the effect, that in matters of finance, an order once given could never be changed, which put an end to a great part of the innumerable intrigues that had been going on for years.

Shortly after the publication of the peace of Vervins, an affair was brought to a conclusion which had long given Henry considerable uneasiness. As we have seen, he had, at one time, encouraged the

pretensions of the Count de Soissons to the hand of his sister the Princess Catherine, but had broken off the proposed alliance on discovering the double and treacherous character of that weak and unstable prince. The Count, however, had contrived to obtain the love of the monarch's sister, and secretly visiting Bearn, while Henry was engaged in the civil wars, he had not only obtained from the Princess a distinct promise of marriage, but had even, it would seem, proposed to unite himself to her at the altar, without the knowledge or consent of her brother.

In order to prevent such a result, Henry had brought her from Bearn; and meeting her at Saumur, had ever after kept her under his own eye. Anxious to marry her to the Duke of Montpensier, he had employed Sully to obtain from Catherine and the Count the written promises which they had exchanged, and Sully had basely effected that object by an unjust and reprehensible stratagem. Nevertheless, Catherine, who inherited the determined character of her mother, resisted all the King's entreaties, remained long attached to Soissons, rejected the Duke of Montpensier, filled the palace of the Louvre itself with Protestant ministers, much to the annoyance and detriment of her brother, and would not hear of any other alliance than that upon which she had set her heart, till after the peace of Vervins, when she at length gave her hand to the Duke of Bar, eldest son of the Duke of Lorraine. She was at

this time in the fortieth year of her age; and she resolutely refused, even on the occasion of her marriage, to renounce the religion in which she had been educated.

The passion of Henry for the fair Gabrielle continued during the course of her life, leading him into acts of extravagance totally inconsistent with his schemes of economy; and, although there can be no doubt that the first feelings of her heart had been given to another, there is every reason to believe that she had become sincerely attached to her royal lover. As may be supposed, the conduct of Henry towards Gabrielle was the occasion of much scandal amongst his people, and many libels were circulated, attributing to the King acts of folly of which he was not guilty, as well as aggravating those which were but too apparent. Nor, indeed, is it at all wonderful that his people should be indignant, and his ministers mortified and distressed at the weakness which he displayed in regard to women, who, without exception, in a more or less degree, took advantage of his passions to extort for themselves or their friends, advantages which should have been reserved for merit and service. The relations of Gabrielle D'Estrées were all raised to posts of emolument and honor; and she herself was elevated to the rank of Marchioness of Monceaux, and Duchess of Beaufort. Her eldest son was created, as I have shown, Duke of Vendome, and, at the baptism of each child, a consider-

able sum was exacted for the ceremony, besides all that was daily bestowed upon the royal concubine herself. Taking advantage of her situation, the Duchess of Beaufort, whose nominal marriage with M. de Liancourt had been dissolved, labored anxiously to induce the King to obtain a divorce from his abandoned wife Marguerite, and unite himself with her by more legitimate ties. But in the course of the year 1599, all her rash aspirations and wild schemes were brought to an end by death. There can be no doubt that Henry had given her some hopes that he would accede to her wishes, and he had even obtained the appointment of Commissioners from Rome, for the purpose of investigating the circumstances of his marriage with Marguerite. While the Pope hesitated and delayed, the approach of Easter induced Henry to separate himself for a time from his mistress, in order to go through the appointed ceremonies of the season, and to perform his devotions with less scandal. He sent her, therefore, from Fontainebleau to Paris, accompanying her part of the way himself. She parted from him on the 5th of April, with tears and presentiments that she should never see him again, and, proceeding on her journey, took up her residence at the house of Zamet, the celebrated financier, being then pregnant with a fourth child.

On the 8th of the month, after dinner, she proceeded to hear the religious service in music, called Tenebres, at the convent of the lesser St.

Antony. She was there suddenly taken ill, and carried back to the house of Zamet, where frightful agonies and convulsions succeeded. In the intervals of pain, she exclaimed continually, "Take me away from this house;" and at her own desire. was ultimately removed to the dwelling of her aunt, Madame de Sourdis, at St. Germain l'Auxerrois, where she expired two days afterwards, in the midst of terrible sufferings, which had left the corpse disfigured in a frightful manner. Decomposition began to show itself almost immediately; and the appearance of the body, as well as the fact of the rapid appearance of putrefaction, accredited the report, that she had met her death by poison.

It may be worth while to examine briefly the foundations for this rumor; and they are such as to establish, beyond all doubt, a strong case of suspicion. The love of Henry IV. for his fair mistress had in no degree decreased, but rather "seemed to grow by what it fed on." Her beauty, of a chaste and attractive, rather than a luxurious and exciting character,—the qualities of her mind, combining gentleness with strong good sense, of which we have many proofs—the warm attachment which she appeared to entertain for the King himself, her participation in his amusements, her concurrence in his views, and the prudence and discretion displayed in all her suggestions, had aliked engaged his heart and his understanding; and there was no moment in his whole career, at which her power

over the mind of the monarch, or her hold upon his affections was more strong, than at the time when death took her from his arms.

A large and splendid apartment had been prepared for the King's mistress in the house of the famous Italian financier, Zamet, as a place of retreat and tranquillity, during her temporary separations from her royal lover; and it becomes in some degree necessary to inquire what was the character and history of the persons by whom she was surrounded, and especially of the man under whose roof she was, at the time she was so suddenly overtaken by an unexpected death. Sebastian Zamet was himself an Italian of very low extraction, born in the small town of Lucca. His father is said to have been a shoemaker in that place; but we have no means of tracing his history, with any certainty, beyond the period at which he appeared at the Court of France, as valet of the wardrobe to Henry III. How he had enriched himself, and risen, in the course of a few years, from poverty, and a low station, to enormous wealth, and high consideration, cannot be clearly ascertained; but it is certain, that at the commencement of his career, France afforded no very honorable means of arriving at such a height of fortune. Commerce was nearly annihilated; manufactures could hardly be said to exist. Science, or warlike prowess, Zamet did not pretend to possess; and yet, with inconceivable rapidity, we find him enabled to lend large sums to

princes and to parties, without any great discrimination of their claims or their objects. Gay, cheerful, witty, serviceable, fond of good cheer and good wine, with a fine taste in the arts, a very unscrupulous spirit, and no troublesome pretensions, Zamet had become the companion of Kings, from being their valet-de-chambre. He was a man, in short, whose conscience was not likely to be very intractable, and whose skill was likely to supply with ease the means of accomplishing any enterprise, which his own interests, or the designs of his patrons, might require.

Henry IV., after his accession to the throne, had become exceedingly familiar with Zamet, dining with him often, and using his house as a place where the restraints of the monarch could be thrown off, and he could indulge in the natural, frank, and unceremonious gaiety of his character without observation; but, beyond all doubt, he had no idea of the real character of the man.

Such was the host of the fair Gabrielle, on her return from Fontainebleau, in 1599; and at his table she dined. Another guest at that table, accompanying her as an honored attendant, to whom her comfort and protection had been particularly recommended by Henry, was Monsieur de La Varenne, the minister of the pleasures of her royal lover. Although his occupation was one marked out as the most base in all ages, La Varenne was a man of courage, and apparently, on all points but

one, of good feeling and of honor. The letter, in which he announced the illness of the Duchess of Beaufort, displayed grief and anxiety, without the slightest appearance of affectation; and his own interests were so totally opposed to any attempt upon her life, that we cannot suppose, for one moment, that he participated in a scheme to deprive his monarch of his mistress, if such a plan were ever really entertained.*

La Varenne had nothing to gain, and every thing to lose, by the death of the fair Gabrielle; but such was not the case with a multitude of the most influential persons at the court of France. Private enmity, political intrigue, the jealousy of women, and the malevolence of men, had all been excited against Gabrielle D'Estrées, by the height of favor to which she had risen, her power over the mind of the King, and by the great probability which existed that he would raise her to the throne of France, as soon as his marriage with Marguerite de Valois should be annulled. De Thou clearly points out, that almost the whole court of France were inimical to the King's mistress, and admits,

* Nevertheless it is evident that La Varenne was not without suspicions that the death of Gabrielle was brought about by unfair means; for in his well-known letter to Sully, in which he describes the death of the Duchess, he adds to an account of the sumptuous repast given to her by Zamet, "which you will remark with your prudence; for mine is not excellent enough to presume things of which nothing has appeared to me."

that under the mourning habits, which they assumed for her death, they concealed no slight portion of satisfaction.

Marguerite de Valois herself, though upon some occasions playing the sycophant in the most humiliating manner to her husband's concubine, loaded her with opprobrious terms in private, and declared she would never consent to the dissolution of their marriage, till she was assured that her place on the throne would not be supplied by the Duchess of Beaufort.

Sully, who had once been her friend, and who by his own confession, owed a great share of Henry's confidence to her influence, had become her enemy, from the moment that she aspired to the position of the King's legitimate wife; and there is a tone of jealous malevolence in the style of that great minister, when he details the transactions between himself and the Duchess of Beaufort in the years 1598 and 1599, from which it is impossible not to draw an inference that he feared her increasing power over Henry, upon personal, as well as public, grounds. Such fears indeed, however apparent, would not be sufficient to justify even a suspicion of Sully, in regard to the great crime with which rumor charged the courtiers of Henry IV., had the character of that minister been as perfectly upright and sincere as he himself endeavors to make it appear; nor would a vague suspicion be worthy of much consideration, were there not ir-

refragable proofs that Monsieur de Rosni himself made use of expressions which, however guarded, showed a previous knowledge of some serious conspiracy against the power or the person of the unhappy lady, whose life was shortly after terminated by a sudden and unusual death. His reputation for sincerity and straightforward dealing, however, is unsustainable, after his own account of the base, false, and insidious means which he employed to withdraw from the hands of the Count de Soissons and the Princess Catherine, the written promises of marriage which they had exchanged. His cognizance of a plot of some kind against the Duchess of Beaufort, is proved by his own statement of a conversation between himself and his wife, dictated to his secretaries in the plenitude of his vain old age. He particularly warned Madame de Rosni to conceal from the Princess of Orange her feelings in regard to the queen-like pretensions with which he charges Gabrielle D'Estrées; but at the same time he consoled her for this restraint, by assuring her that "she would see a fine game, and well played, if the rope did break."* A curious similarity is remarkable between the expression used by Sully and the exclamation of the President de Harlay, on hearing of the death of Gabrielle, "Laqueus contritus est!" cried the old magistrate several times; and although we must not

* Œconomies royales, chap. XC. p. 422.

interpret literally either the words of de Harlay or Sully, as regards the method of the Duchess of Beaufort's death, yet it is evident that such an event was anticipated, when she was in strong health, by many persons at the court of France. Sully declares that the disease of which she died was apoplexy; but not one symptom of apoplexy was apparent. Tremendous convulsions, giddiness, great internal pain, and, according to Aubigné, a violent sensation of burning in the throat, with a sense of suffocation, presented themselves at different times; but for many hours the fair Gabrielle was able to speak at intervals, did not lose the command of her intellect, and even, we are told by some, made an effort to write to the King. One of Henry's physicians, La Riviere, we are assured, would not even attempt to treat her case when he perceived the state she was in; but after having taken three steps in the room, turned back again, saying, "Hic est manus Domini." Mézerai does not scruple to declare that Gabrielle d'Estrées died by the hand of man; and a modern writer of much merit and research * has accumulated a mass of evidence, which leaves a grave case of suspicion against the courtiers and councillors of Henry IV. Certain it is, that the Duchess of Beaufort did not die of apoplexy, nor of any of the ordinary accidents attending pregnancy. Certain it is, that few persons of the court were astonished or grieved at her death; certain

* M. E. de Fréville. Notice Historique, &c.

that her disease was announced to the King himself before it had actually taken place ; and equally certain that Sully, and most probably, many other persons, had a previous knowledge of some designs to put an end to her influence over Henry, and to frustrate the monarch's intention of raising her to the throne. We may hope that natural causes, with which we are unacquainted, rendered the execution of those designs unnecessary, and even that they never went to a criminal extent; we may be unwilling to give credence to the reports of poisoning at a period when the charge had become vulgar, even if the act was not common; but the unusual circumstances attending the death of the fair Gabrielle, with the many motives which existed for removing her from a scene, where her prolonged existence threatened to thwart both the just and the unjust plans of many of the most powerful and ambitious men in France, must ever leave the mind of those who search the records of that age minutely, oppressed with a painful suspicion that never can be removed.

Henry was deeply afflicted at the intelligence of his loss, and for several days gave himself up to all the bitterness of his sorrow; but he did not suffer his grief to interfere long with the business of the state, and in constant occupation and a new attachment he soon found consolation.

No sooner was Gabrielle dead, than the Queen Marguerite, who had never ceased to bestow upon

her the most opprobrious names, forgetting that if the Duchess of Beaufort was a concubine, she herself was an adulteress of the most gross and disgusting kind, joined in the King's application to Rome for a speedy dissolution of their marriage; and the ministers of Henry pressed for it eagerly, in the hope of seeing another more happy union afford legitimate heirs to the throne of France. The fears which had been entertained of the King's marriage with Gabrielle having passed away, the Pope consented without difficulty to the wishes of both parties, and deputed ecclesiastical commissioners to judge the case in France. But before the affair was terminated, the King had once more fallen into the toils of love, and had become deeply enamoured of the famous Henriette D'Entragues,* a far more dangerous, cunning and interested woman than Gabrielle. Tutored by her father, she succeeded in inducing Henry to give a written promise of marriage, which the Duchess of Beaufort had never been able to obtain. It would not become this book to enter into the whole history of these

* Catherine Henriette de Balzac D'Entragues, daughter of François de Balzac Lord of Entragues, Marcoussy and Malesherbes, and of Marie Touchet, previously mistress of Charles IX., by whom she had one son, Count of Auvergne. The reputation of Henriette, according to Sully, was not quite immaculate before her connexion with Henry; and certainly the mercenary cunning which she displayed in the whole of her dealings with the King showed more of the spirit of the prostitute than the weakness of the inexperienced girl.

intrigues; but one circumstance regarding the King's connexion with this new mistress must be related to the honor both of Sully and the monarch. After having drawn up the promise, the King placed it in the hands of his minister, asking his advice. Sully, after some consideration, tore it in pieces, on which the King exclaimed with an oath, "I believe you are mad."

"True, Sire, I am," replied Sully, "but would to God I were the only madman in France." Henry's anger required time to cool, but instead of disgracing his minister, he shortly after bestowed upon him the high post of grand master of the artillery, although he did not fail to have another promise drawn up in the same terms as that which had been destroyed. This rash and foolish act produced great inconvenience at an after period, although the condition upon which the promise was made, namely, that Henriette bore him a son within the year, was not strictly accomplished. In the meantime, his ministers hurried on negotiations* for the marriage of the King with Mary de Medicis, a daughter of the Ducal house of Tuscany. The King's union with Marguerite de Valois was dissolved on the 11th November, 1599, and on the 6th of January, in the following year, Monsieur de

* We find that in the first application of Henry's ministers to the Pope, for the dissolution of his marriage with Marguerite, before the death of Gabrielle, the probable marriage of the monarch with Mary was held out as an inducement.

Sillery received orders to apply formally for the hand of the Florentine Princess. The treaty with the Grand Duke was signed in April, and with such haste was the whole carried on, that the news of his irrevocable engagement fell upon Henry like a thunderbolt. Various circumstances delayed the espousals of the Queen elect, however, and many efforts were employed to withdraw from the hands of Henriette d'Entragues, now Marquise de Verneuil, the promise which had been given her by the King. Negotiations, too, with the Duke of Savoy, in regard to the restoration of the Marquisate de Saluces, which that Prince had wrested from the crown of France, occupied the end of 1599, and the commencement of 1600, and Charles Emanuel visited the French monarch in the month of December, of the former year, striving vainly to retain possession of his conquest. He bribed the mistress, and some of the ministers of the King with enormous presents; he endeavored to seduce the monarch's nobles from their allegiance, and there can be little doubt, that with the Duc de Biron he succeeded, even at this period, so far as to establish a clear understanding between them, which afterwards proved fatal to the fidelity of the French Marshal.* The King, however, was proof

* Biron affected the most scrupulous reserve towards the Duke of Savoy, and refused so ostentatiously the presents offered him by the Duke as to create a strong suspicion that his probity was less real than apparent.

against all his arts; and declaring that he would not treat in person with his cousin of Savoy, but leave the decision of their differences to deputies, he endeavored to occupy that Prince with various amusements, of which the Duke, on his part, took advantage, to carry on his intrigues with Bouillon, Biron, and the Count d'Auvergne, of whom we have spoken under the name of Grand Prior, who was also, it must be remarked, brother, by the mother's side, to the Marquise de Verneuil. The Duke, notwithstanding all his efforts, did not succeed in seducing such a number of the French nobles into the conspiracy which he labored to form, as in the slightest degree to embarrass the proceedings of the King; and he at length quitted Paris, after having entered into an engagement either to restore the Marquisate, or give in exchange the territory called la Bresse. Three months were allowed him to decide between the two; and he quitted Paris in the hope that events might take place, which would remove the necessity of carrying the treaty into effect. The period fixed passed away, however, and the treasonable purposes of Biron evaporated for the time in petulant sallies, which offended Henry without depriving the Marshal of his master's confidence. The King now demanded of Savoy, in a peremptory tone, the execution of the convention; but the Duke contrived to procrastinate for nearly two months longer, negotiating with Spain, and making preparations for war.

Wearied out with his subterfuges, Henry advanced to Lyons, where he arrived on the 9th of July; but here fresh negotiations were commenced by the wily Duke, who, notwithstanding his known character, contrived more than once to lull the suspicions of the King, and induce him to believe that he was now sincere in his desire for peace. At one time he proposed, through the three ambassadors, whom he sent to meet the King at Lyons, to give up the marquisate of Saluces, provided the King would grant the investiture thereof to one of his sons. This was refused by the French monarch; and an unconditional surrender demanded. The unconditional surrender was agreed to by the ambassadors, and a treaty drawn up; but Roncas, one of the Duke's deputies, demanded permission to lay the terms before his master, and left the court of France for that purpose. The Duke then required, that hostages should be exchanged, well knowing that much time must be expended in their selection while the treaty still remained unsigned; and the decision of the questions between France and Savoy was indefinitely removed. The self-evident object of gaining time for preparation is mentioned by all authorities as having actuated the Savoyard; but another motive is assigned by some, which is quite consistent with the superstitious credulity of the age. It had been predicted by an astrologer, that in the month of August there would be no king in France; and with less imprudence than was fre-

quently displayed by believers in the pretended science of astrology, the Duke strove for a delay, which, while it enabled him to extend his resources and concert measures with his allies, would give the prophecy a chance of fulfilment; and, strange to say, it did receive fulfilment, but not in the manner which the Duke expected, or desired.

Having, in a conference with the deputies of his artful cousin, detected their insincerity and dissipated their pretences, Henry wrote in haste to Sully to hurry all the preparations, which he had previously countermanded; and, publishing a declaration of war on the eleventh of August, he advanced at once into the territories of Savoy, thus verifying the prediction, that in that month there would be no king in France. The Duke of Guise was despatched to secure Provence. Lesdiguieres occupied Dauphiné; and Biron was fixed upon by the King, perhaps in the hopes of confirming his wavering fidelity, to lead an army from the side of Burgundy. With numerous and well-disciplined forces, with a powerful artillery and large stores of ammunition, prepared long beforehand by the careful Sully, no doubt could be entertained of Henry's success, unless the troops of Spain were immediately put in motion to defend the Duke of Savoy. Various circumstances, however, some apparent and some concealed, were likely to render the war tedious, unless the whole energies of the King and the whole resources of the country were

directed to overwhelm resistance at once. Towns strongly fortified and well-garrisoned lay in every direction before the French monarch. Time had been allowed to accumulate stores, to repair old and raise up new defences. Mountain-passes and forts, considered in that day impregnable, afforded a secure retreat to the forces of Savoy, if defeated in the Low Country; and immature treason in the court and camp of France was ready to favor the operations of the enemy, and to seize on the first opportunity afforded by reverse for raising once more the standard of civil war in the kingdom so lately tranquillized.

The measures of the King, however, had been well concerted; and two powerful armies were ready to fall upon Savoy the moment a declaration of war was published. Biron was indeed already in the field; and Lesdiguieres, at the head of the forces of Dauphiné, was close upon the frontiers of the Duke of Savoy's dominions. The very position assigned to Biron showed caution on the part of the King, without manifesting any injurious suspicion. To refuse him a command at such a moment would have been the surest means of driving him at once into open rebellion; and the conduct of the campaign on the side of Burgundy seemed naturally to fall into his hands. But the destined scene of his operations was at a distance from the centre of events; and the advance of the King and Lesdiguieres was certain, if unchecked,

to cut him off from all free communication with the Duke of Savoy.

The first town destined to be attacked was Bourg en Bresse, a large and well-fortified city; and it had been determined that an attempt was to be made on the night of the thirteenth of August, to take the place by surprise. The account given by Sully is confirmed in many points by other writers and by public documents; but, in transcribing it here, it may be necessary to warn the reader against a certain amount of prejudice entertained by the historian against the Duc de Biron, which even the death of the latter was not able to extinguish.

"Biron was at that very time," says Sully, "deeply engaged to the Duke of Savoy. It is even believed, that the treaty between them was actually sketched out. He gave notice to Bouvens, the governor of Bourg, to be upon his guard, and indicated to him the night and the hour when they expected to surprise him. All this has been proved since; but, strange to say, this treachery did not prevent the capture of Bourg on the very night previously fixed. Bouvens communicated the intelligence he received to the garrison and the inhabitants. He exhorted them to defend themselves well, lighted great fires, and doubled, or even trebled the corps de garde; in a word, took every sort of precaution, even to acting the part of sentinel himself upon the night pointed out. Every one in the town waited with impatience for the approach of midnight, which was

the hour named in Biron's letter, as that on which the attack would be made. Biron, however, who was himself at the head of his troops, either to give more time to the governor to cause the enterprise to fail, or by mere accident, made so long a circuit, that, instead of midnight, it was dawn of day, when he at length appeared before Bourg. He then endeavored to persuade the officers that the attempt should be put off to another time, the hour being unfavorable for such a design. Several of his companions, Sully declares, were of the same opinion; but the majority were opposed to it; and their numbers carried the question as to the attack, Biron not venturing to compromise his renown in arms by conduct which might bear the imputation of timidity. Monsieur de Castenet declared, that he was ready to apply the petard with his own hands in open day, even if the bastions were lined with troops; and the Marshal made no further opposition, trusting, it is supposed, that the garrison would be found prepared, and that an enterprise, for which he was no longer responsible, would fail.

"The contrary, however, was the case. The citizens and the soldiery, after having watched through the whole night without attack, imagined that they had been deceived, or that the enterprise of the French had already miscarried; and at dawn they retired to their beds, leaving a few sleepy sentinels on the walls. De Castenet, accompanied by three men carrying petards, and followed by

twelve others well-armed, advanced unchallenged to the counterscarp, where a sentinel for the first time exclaimed, "Who goes there?" The French officer answered, that they were friends, who had come to inform the governor, that a large body of armed men had been seen within a short distance of the town; but had since retreated; and adding, that he had several things of importance to say to Monsieur de Bouvens from the Duke of Savoy, he bade the sentinel go and tell that officer to order the gates to be opened. The man imprudently obeyed; De Castenet advanced at once to the gates, applied his petards; and in a moment a breach was effected, by which the whole French army rushed into the town. De Bouvens had only time to retreat with the garrison into the citadel, which, however, held out for some time, occupying the forces of the Duc de Biron, and preventing his co-operation with the King."

Henry's progress in the south, however, was much more rapid. On the seventeenth of August the town of Montmeillant was taken by assault. The garrison, however, retreated into the citadel before the French force under Lesdiguieres, and threatened to hold out to the last. As the place was fully provisioned, the garrison numerous and apparently resolute, and the citadel itself generally held to be impregnable by arms, the siege promised to be tedious; and it was proposed to confine the operations against it merely to a blockade. Lesdi-

guieres, however, vehemently urged more active measures and declared, that he was willing to pay the whole expenses of the enterprise, if he did not compel the castle to surrender by force. His views were justified by the result; for, after a short siege, the governor, Monsieur de Brandis, entered into a capitulation, by which it was agreed, that the place should be surrendered, if not relieved within one month. The honor of the enterprise and of the victory is attributed by some historians to Lesdiguieres, and is claimed by Sully, who gives a long account of the siege; but there cannot be the least doubt, that Lesdiguieres was one of those who urged the King most warmly to undertake the siege. An anecdote is related by Sully in reference to the attack upon Montmeillant, which shows that Henry had lost none of the fiery spirit, that distinguished him in youth. Sully, it would seem, had exacted from him a promise not to be present at the siege; but the King could not refrain from giving way to his eager desire to witness, at least, some of the operations against one of the most celebrated fortresses of Savoy; and he forced his friend to free him most unwillingly from the engagement he had made. Sully, however, requested earnestly, that Henry would not expose himself to the fire of the place, and to present himself with such a suite, as would not attract the attention of the besieged. He also entreated him to avoid, by a detour of half a league, an open field covered with large stones, to-

wards which the guns of one of the principal batteries were turned to interrupt the communication between the French camp and an important work which had been erected on the rock. Henry, however, giving way to his old impetuosity, insisted upon crossing the field, which lay within musket-shot of the battery. A tremendous, but not very well-directed fire, was instantly opened on his party, ploughing up the ground all round them, and covering them with a shower of earth and stones. "Let us get away," cried Henry, making the sign of the cross; "it is not pleasant here;" and setting his spurs to his horse, he galloped away from a scene of such unnecessary danger.

The siege of the citadel of Montmeillant occupied some weeks; and, while it was proceeding, as well as before it had actually commenced, Henry and Lesdiguieres had marched from victory to victory, hardly one of the many fortified towns of Savoy holding out more than a few days. The town of Chambery was one of the first, that surrendered to the King in person; and the citadel began to parley on the following day; the troops of the Duke of Savoy were permitted to march out with drums beating and colours flying; and on the same night Madame de Rosni gave a ball in the town, which was attended by all the principal inhabitants. The small town of Conflans, however, held out for a short time, but yielded after a severe cannonade. A number of other places of little importance surrendered without

resistance; and, advancing up the vallies of the Arc and the Isère, the French armies made themselves masters of the whole country nearly to the foot of Mont Cenis. The only place besides the castle o. Montmeillant, which offered a vigorous resistance, was the citadel of Charbonniere. Built upon a rock and surrounded by almost inaccessible precipices, it put to the trial both Sully's skill and determination; but the great part of one of the bastions being ruined, and the powder-magazine having exploded, the garrison surrendered at discretion and were treated with lenity. With no very great sense of decency, and carried away by the passion, which had led him into a thousand follies in the course of his life, the French monarch, even while his ministers were concluding the treaty of marriage between himself and Mary de Medicis, dispatched the flags, which had been found in the castle of Charbonniere to Henriette d'Entragues at Lyons; and the lady, as if to make publicly known the devotion of her royal lover, caused these trophies to be exposed in the church of St. John, where they must have met the eyes of the Queen on her first arrival in France.

Shortly after the fall of Charbonniere, an event took place, which did great honor to the character of the King. Whilst staying for a few days at Grenoble, he found one morning upon his table a note written by some unknown person, who informed him, by this means, that two gentlemen of the Lyonnois, named Chazeul and Dubourg, were conspiring

against his person. On inquiring who had placed it there, he could obtain no intelligence; but found, that a number of similar papers had been scattered through the whole of the royal apartments. Attributing the act to malice, he instantly sent for Monsieur de Chazeul, who happened to be in the court at the time, and placed the note in his hands, assuring him, that he did not give the slightest credence to the charge. He ordered a letter also to be written to Dubourg, who was in Lyons raising a regiment for his service, with the same expressions of confidence, which he had used towards Chazeul; but rumors of the accusation preceded the King's epistle; and Dubourg, setting out at once, arrived at Grenoble, while the King was at dinner. As soon as he presented himself, Henry demanded why he had come; and the officer answered bluntly: "There runs a story at Lyons, Sire, that I seek to kill your Majesty. I therefore set off post-haste to bring you my head." The King immediately assured him, that he had not believed a word of the charge; and that he never had, or would give ear to the insinuations of jealous and discontented men. "Return to Lyons, Dubourg," he added; "complete your regiment, and lead it hither with all speed; that will be the greatest punishment which you can inflict upon your unknown enemy."

Although nothing but success had attended the arms of the French monarch, the Duke of Savoy had not been inactive. He had twice attempted to

raise the siege of Montmeillant, at the head of a large army; but the position of the besieging force, the advanced period of the year, and the snow, which had already fallen in the mountains, prevented him from giving any assistance to the garrison. The place surrendered, as I have described; and the troops marched out with the honors of war on the sixteenth of November; but, before that event took place, Henry had been joined by Cardinal Aldobrandini, charged by the Holy See to mediate between the contending parties; and two envoys from the Duke of Savoy soon after arrived in his camp. Leaving them to treat with his council, the King again put his troops in motion, and forced the fort of St. Catherine to capitulate; after which, hearing that the ceremony of his marriage by proxy had taken place at Florence on the 5th of October, and that the Queen was on her way to France, he left the conduct of his army to his Generals, and hastened to meet his bride in Lyons. The Queen had arrived in that city, however, eight days before the King made his appearance, but on the 9th of December the marriage was consummated.

Five days after the Legate joined the King in Lyons, and after many discussions, a treaty of peace was concluded, by which the Duke of Savoy agreed to cede to the King of France the whole territory which he possessed on the French bank of the Rhone, from the point of its exit out of Lake

Leman, with the exception of some bridges, and the villages attached to them. The whole of Bresse, and several other Lordships, were thus secured to France, and the Duke retained the Marquisate of Saluces, which was much more desirable to him than the territory he resigned, and had hitherto proved of little advantage to the Kings of France.

As soon as the treaty was signed, Henry set out for Paris, whither he was speedily followed by the Queen and the court, but Biron had received a new mortification in the superior success and favor of Lesdiguieres, which irritated his haughty and impetuous heart, and engendered a hatred of the King which plunged him deeper and deeper every day into intrigues against his sovereign.

Henry could not be unaware of the machinations of his enemies, nor altogether without suspicion of Biron himself; but habit had quickly rendered him indifferent to acts which at first affected him acutely. Scarcely a day passed without some enterprise against his life being discovered. In the year 1600, no less than four attempts were made to assassinate him, one by a woman named Mignon, who endeavored to gain admission for her husband into the Royal kitchen, for the purpose of administering poison to the monarch; but having spoken to the Count de Soissons upon the subject, in the hope that his ambition might lead him to aid in the design, that Prince concealed one of the King's officers in his chamber, while the woman detailed

her whole scheme, and she was accordingly convicted and executed.

Other assassins are said to have hovered about his camp on the frontiers of Savoy; but though they were recognized by information forwarded from Piedmont, the King would not permit them to be arrested, saying: "Such wickedness is never suffered to go long unrequited; God will punish them without my meddling with the matter." In another instance, a capuchin of Milan sent intimation to the court of France, that a man had set out from Italy for the express purpose of destroying the King. The assassin was detected in the midst of the court, but we find from Sully that Henry showed less consternation on this occasion than when he was suddenly informed that his marriage with Mary de Medicis was concluded.

Various circumstances, regarding the conduct of Biron, reached the monarch's ears during the campaign against the Duke of Savoy, and that Prince himself had the imprudence to utter words which directed the attention of the whole court to the persons suspected of being dissatisfied with the Government; but whatever were the suspicions of the King, he concealed them in the hope of bringing the Marshal back to a sense of duty, and an occasion soon occurred of removing him honorably for a time from the scene of his intrigues.

An affray had taken place in Spain between

some gentlemen attached to the French Ambassador, Rochepot, and a party of Spaniards, in which one at least of the latter was killed. The Spanish authorities, without respect for Rochepot's position, broke into his house, and arrested the homicides. Henry resented the indignity offered to the embassy, and having, sometime before, discovered a scheme, devised by Fuentes, for seizing Marseilles, imagined that this act was but an indication of approaching war. Anxious for the safety of his frontier towns, he hastened at once to Calais, where he was visited both by envoys from the Archduke, then besieging Ostend, and from the Queen of England, very well disposed to see the French monarch once more embroiled with her enemies. The Pope, however, reconciled the Kings of Spain and France; and Henry embraced the pretext afforded by the embassy of Elizabeth for sending Biron to return the compliment which the English Queen had paid him.

The danger of war having passed away, Henry returned to Fontainebleau, in order to be present at the birth of his first legitimate child, and on the 27th of September, 1601, was born a son, in whose infant hand the monarch placed the hilt of his drawn sword, saying: "Mayst thou, my son, employ it for the glory of God, and the defence of the crown, and of the people." The prayer of the King was not heard, and the child became, in after years, the weak and favorite-governed Louis XIII.

The birth of an heir to the crown only stimulated Henry the more strongly to labor for the restoration of prosperity in his kingdom; various burdensome offices were suppressed, and the favorite plan of Sully was carried into execution, in order to force the financiers and farmers of the revenue, to disgorge a part of their ill-gotten wealth. A number of judges were selected from the superior courts, and formed into a chamber for inquiring into the malversations which had taken place during the times past. A number of financiers were compelled to account to the crown for the immense sums, they had received and applied to their own purposes; but the all-powerful aid of gold was brought to blind the judges, and corrupt the favorites of the King, and many escaped unpunished who deserved chastisement as much as those who suffered.

Two edicts of very doubtful policy were added, though both were but the revival of ancient laws. By the one, the exportation of gold and silver was strictly prohibited; the other forbade the display of the precious metals in the decoration of houses or garments, and to the latter the King subjected himself as well as his people. The rate of legal interest was reduced to six per cent., and an attempt upon false principles was made to encourage the production and manufacture of silk in France, which failed for the time, but was afterwards renewed with better success. Every branch of industry, however, received encourage-

ment from the monarch, and although the limited experience of those times, in many instances, was inadequate to direct the efforts of the King in the surest paths to commercial prosperity, yet his indefatigable exertions were not lost; arts succeeded to arms, agriculture once more brightened the face of the land, and supplied the necessities of the people, and trade and manufacture opened the way to wealth, with peace and order in their train.

The example of the King himself also had a great effect upon all classes of his subjects; his industry inspired them with the same spirit; his activity gave an impulse to the habits of the nation; his own frugality, except where his mistresses were concerned, and that which he enforced in his court, rendered prodigality shameful. The disgusting and horrible crimes which had disgraced the court of his predecessors, totally disappeared; and, as if to prove more strongly the influence of the Royal example, those vices only remained in which he himself indulged. The offences, too, which had been engendered by anarchy, were suppressed with a severe hand, and in the short space of between three and four years, the highways became comparatively safe, the fields were no longer swept by bands of robbers, and popular commotions became rare.

Nevertheless, some of the measures which had been devised by Sully, and adopted by the King, were neither wise nor just. The taxes which the necessity of the state had induced the King to place

upon merchandise entering walled cities in 1596, were severe upon all classes, and showed that utter ignorance of the just principles of taxation, in which alone originate all imposts affecting the transit of goods from one part of the same country to another. Commerce was shackled thereby; infinite opportunities of fraud were afforded; the cost of collection was immense; and time, the most invaluable of commodities to all men, and especially to merchants, was wasted with the most wanton carelessness. After many remonstrances, and some tumults, Henry was obliged to relieve the people from this odious tax; but he did not do so till he had suppressed resistance, and vindicated the authority of the law.

An attempt was made, in the course of this reign, to open mines in search of gold, silver, and copper, but the science of Geology was little known; no means were taken, except by the examination of ancient traditions, to ascertain that the metals sought for were likely to be found in the places where the works were commenced; and after a time the operations were suspended: having produced no advantageous result, but the employment of some out of the many idle persons whom peace had deprived of their habitual occupations.

The construction of a great canal for the junction of the Loire and the Seine, was a work more worthy of the monarch, and though the operations were interrupted not long after their commencement, the canal of Briare was traced out by Henry, and easily

finished under Louis XIII. It is proved also that the design for opening a communication by water between the two seas, the execution of which reflected so much honor on the reign of Louis XIV., was entertained by Henry, but the finances of the state had not sufficiently recovered before the monarch's death to justify so great and expensive an undertaking. Companies trading to Canada were likewise established with the sanction of the King, and great efforts were made to render the French a commercial people. It is true that most of these enterprises were suggested by individuals; but Henry had at least the glory of encouraging energetically every attempt to improve and enrich his people. In their happiness and prosperity he sought to found his title to fame, and the enlarged and generous views which he displayed during peace, have added more to his reputation than all the military glory which he acquired in the field.

As the internal tranquillity of Henry's dominions was re-established, great political changes in the relations of different states presented themselves to his mind, and he conceived schemes of such magnitude as to receive, if not deserve, the name of chimeras. They would have required resources of many kinds, which he did not possess, to carry them into execution, as well as a degree of union amongst all the smaller and some of the greater powers of Europe, such as has never been seen but once in ancient or in modern times. Nevertheless, as in the

experiments of the alchemists, where valuable medicines were frequently discovered in the search for imaginary powers, so in the pursuit of objects probably unattainable, many wise and beneficial plans were framed, which only required the prolongation of the King's life to have been perfected and executed. It is difficult to arrive at any precise notion of Henry's ultimate views; and the want of full information has induced many writers to disbelieve the fact of his having entertained any of the definite and extensive schemes attributed to him by contemporaries; but the concurring testimony of those who knew him best, leads me to believe, that a favorite project of a comprehensive and extraordinary character, occupied many of his thoughts from the moment that he felt himself firmly seated on the throne of France. Sully seems to think that the scheme was perfectly practicable; but whether the object was limited, as some have asserted, to reducing the power of the house of Austria; or whether it extended to the partition of Europe into fifteen great monarchies, and to the establishment of a "Christian Republic," (by means of a general council, representing those powers, and sitting permanently), as others affirm*—whether the one

* Voltaire denies the existence of any such project, pointing out that no trace of any negotiations upon the subject is to be found in the archives of any European state; but it may be remarked that it was in no degree probable that Henry would communicate plans to any foreign power, the first step to the execution of which was the depression by force of arms, of two

design was a fixed and clearly defined resolution, and the other merely a brilliant but evanescent fancy, it would be very difficult in these days to ascertain. Certain it is, that Henry demanded from his minister Sully various written schemes and statements, as steps to the execution of some very great and difficult design, which would require the whole resources of France to be economised for many years: and, from the plans thus formed, issued a number of most beneficial projects, few of which, unhappily for posterity, were carried into effect. In the joint labors of the King and his minister, new objects, new regulations presented themselves every hour: memorial brought forth memorial; one scheme branched out into half a dozen others; institutions were conceived; laws were drawn up; and a completely new organization of society, founded on notions of transcendent excellence, such as the world has never seen, appeared as visions to the eyes of the monarch and his friend.

To afford some idea of the vastness and also of the visionary character of these designs, I will give, in a somewhat abbreviated form, part of the account furnished by Sully himself, of the contents of a cabinet to be prepared for the King in one of the halls of the Louvre, which were to comprise, arranged in drawers and cases, all the memoirs and reports about to be collected. "The labor

great monarchies, allied to, if not connected with, most of the other powers.

required was immense. To obtain a notion of it without repetitions, let one imagine every thing connected immediately or remotely with the finances, with war, with the artillery, with the navy, commerce, and police, with the coinage, with the mines, and in a word, with every part of government, interior and exterior, ecclesiastic, civil, political, and domestic. Every one of all these parts had its separate place in this state cabinet, so that all the documents concerning it would be found ready to the hand at a glance, in whatever quantity they might be. On the side appropriated to the finances, were seen the collection of different regulations, records of financial operations, changes made or to be made, the sums to receive or to be paid, and an almost innumerable mass of statements, memorials, totals, and summaries, more or less abridged.

In regard to military matters, besides the accounts, details, and memorials, marking the actual state of things, there would have been found the edicts and state papers, works upon tactics, plans, maps, and charts of France and other parts of the world. Large copies of these maps, mixed with various pieces of painting, were to be placed in the great gallery. The idea also was entertained of appropriating one of the large halls below, with the floor above, to the purposes of a museum of models and specimens of all the most curious machines destined to be used in war, the arts, and different trades, and in all sorts of exercises, noble, liberal

or mechanical, in order that those who sought perfection might come and without trouble instruct themselves in this silent school. The lower story would have served for the heavier things, and the higher for the lighter. An exact inventory of both was to have been amongst the documents of the cabinet of which I am speaking.

Lists of all the benefices of the kingdom, with their denomination and just appreciation, reports of the whole ecclesiastical body, secular and regular, from the highest prelate to the lowest clerk, with the distinction of native and foreigner, and of both religions, would not have been amongst the least curious documents of those referring to the ecclesiastical government.

This labor was the model of another affecting the police, by which the King would have been able to see, to an individual, the number of the nobility of the whole realm, divided into classes, and specified by the difference of titles, estates, &c.; an idea the more agreeable to the King, as he had been meditating for a long time the plan of a new order of knighthood, together with that of an academy, a college, and a royal hospital, destined for the nobility alone, without this useful and honorable institution being chargeable to the public or burdensome to the finances. It was proposed at the same time to form a camp or permanent corps of six thousand infantry, a thousand horse, and six pieces of artillery, completely equipped. Twelve

ships and twelve galleys kept in good order, corresponded in the naval department to this new military establishment.

As the project of improvement and reform in every direction, held one of the principal places in the train of that which, according to the design of Henry, was to change the face of all Europe, and which was illustrated and developed in the clearest manner and most extended form, there were details upon every kind of subject. In regard to war, for instance, the means were indicated for maintaining such exact discipline—not only during actual warfare, but even in time of peace—that it would have rendered the artizan, the clergyman, and the labourer, sacred in the eyes of the soldier. These four sorts of professions, upon which indeed the whole state turns, would have found every degree of security against oppression on the part of the nobility, in other regulations of police and internal government, the papers upon which subject pointed out so accurately the distinctions between different stations and the extent of the rights of each, that none of them could thenceforward have abused its superiority, or withdrawn itself from due subordination.

The object of the memorials referring to the clergy, was to induce them to use the property which, justly speaking, does not belong to themselves, in the manner pointed out by the canons to prevent the union of two benefices of more than the annual value of six hundred livres; to prevent any from

exceeding a revenue of ten thousand livres, and moreover to bring them to perform their functions worthily, and to look upon giving a good example as one of the first duties of their calling."

Sully then goes on to speak of several other minor projects, and enters into various details regarding the finances, the taxes, and their means of collection, which show that whatever progress he had made in the art of government, hardly a glimpse of the science of political economy had visited himself or any one else in France. We are becoming aware, and doubtless shall ere long be fully convinced, that the most burdensome species of taxation is that which shackles industry and throws impediments in the way of commerce; in fact, that the very worst source of revenue is that which comes under the name of excise; and yet we find him resting his whole scheme of finance upon those onerous imposts and embarrassing transit duties, which at one time rendered it more difficult to send goods from Orleans to Paris, than we find it now to dispatch commodities from London to Constantinople. These formed the principal funds from which the treasury was actually supplied; but there were one or two minor sources of revenue, amongst which were the ever odious duty upon salt, several very dangerous monopolies, the sale of public offices, and an annual tax upon those who enjoyed them, in whose families they had been made hereditary, probably at the instigation of Sully himself. It would be endless either to recapitulate or to examine the multitude of corrupt

and perilous measures which were proposed by this great minister in order to swell the finances of the state in case of need, and against which the good sense of the King led him to remonstrate warmly, though many of them were afterwards defended, and some adopted, by the famous Cardinal de Richelieu. Sully's plans for the collection, distribution, computation, and settlement of the revenue, were almost in all instances very great improvements upon the preceding arrangements, but not one fundamental change was proposed which could relieve the commerce or stimulate the industry of France.

Vain and even detrimental regulations for the repression of luxury were also proposed, amongst which it is amusing to see, that Sully set his face vehemently against the use of carriages, although he went in one almost every day to the Louvre, and even obtained admission for it into the court of the palace on the plea of the night air being dangerous to his health. The minister goes on to tell us, that another project was entertained, by which the law officers of the Crown were ordered to prosecute and punish in an exemplary manner all persons who led a scandalous, prodigal, or dissolute life, either to the prejudice of the public, of other individuals, or of themselves, under pain of answering in their own persons for all disorders occurring by their negligence or connivance. To carry out this censorship of morals, an institution was proposed which brings the mind back to very remote ages. Three

persons were to be chosen triennially, in a public assembly of each district in which a parliament existed, who, under the name of Censors or Reformers, were bound to denounce fathers of families, children, and all other persons, accused of carrying "*dissolute habits beyond the bounds of honor,*" or their expenses beyond their means; and moreover to compel the judges themselves to execute the law upon such offenders, by proceeding against them as accessories, in case of refusal. Two admonitions were to precede prosecution; but at the third, an action was to be commenced, which, on sufficient proof, ended in a sentence whereby the property of all *bad managers* was placed in the hands of trustees, who had only power to grant them two-thirds of their revenues, till such time as all debts were paid, and they had given proof of a sincere intention of "thinking and acting in a more reasonable manner."

This was certainly one of the most extraordinary visions of benevolent police, that ever entered into the head of man since the days of Lycurgus; and was little to be expected in France and in the seventeenth century; but to this was to be added, a regulation or law not quite so impracticable; to the effect that no person, whatever might be his station, fortune, or quality, should borrow a sum, *considerable in regard to his means,* nor any other person lend it, under pain of losing it, without there being stated in the acknowledgment, the pur-

poses for which it was to be employed, to what debts the borrower was already subject, to whom they were due, what property they were charged upon, and what income he still possessed, not only to secure the sum borrowed, but also to provide for his family. It was also proposed to prohibit all parents from giving to one of their children, on establishing him in life, an unfair proportion in relation to their actual means and to the number of their children, born or likely to be born, "according to reasonable probability." The only case in which an unequal partition was admissible, was where the paternal authority had been despised or insulted; and there, not only clear proof was to be adduced against the offending child, but the deprivation could only extend to acquisitions, conquests, and chattels.

Besides these regulations, it was proposed by the King and Sully to undertake a task, which has been found more onerous and less practicable than any of the labors of Hercules, by those who have grappled with it, in all ages; namely, "to correct the innumerable abuses of the bar, to abridge law suits, and destroy the contemptible art of chicanery." The method devised was by no means unfeasible, and might even have been extended to other cases which it was not apparently destined to affect. In all causes between relations, the plaintiff was bound in the first instance to offer, and even to demand, that all differences between himself and the defendant, should be referred to the arbitration of four persons

chosen by the parties; to name his own two arbitrators without delay, and to give in, in writing, signed with his own hand, all his pretensions and demands, without the power of adding any thing thenceforth. The defendant was also bound to name his arbitrators within a month, and signify in writing his means of defence, to which he was prohibited from adding any thing at an after period. Within another month, the arbitrators were to be put in possession of all the documents and proofs on both sides; and the same period was allowed to the four referees to pronounce their decision. If any points occurred upon which the voices of the arbitrators were equally divided, they had the power of choosing a fifth, who judged definitively those points alone: all others on which a conclusion had been arrived at by the majority, being considered as already decided and beyond the competence of the fifth arbitrator. A very limited appeal was permitted; but the judges were forbidden to open the case anew, by calling for further evidence, or receiving any additional proofs tendered. Their sole function was to decide upon the conduct of the arbitrators, on due consideration of the case as it had been laid before them, and to confirm or reverse their judgment. A month or six weeks was the time allowed the judges, according to this project, for the annunciation of their sentence, and, if it were not pronounced within that time, the unfortunate judges themselves were condemned to the payment of all costs and damages.

In giving an account of some of the projects which filled the mind of Henry, and they are few out of many, I have followed the course of Sully's statement, though it leads the mind far from the point at which it started; but it must not be forgotten that all the schemes for the improvement of the revenue, and for restoring peace, prosperity, and good order, in the kingdom, were connected more or less closely with a great design to which the minister frequently alludes, for changing the entire face of European policy.

It often happens that men of very extended views, while placing before their eyes objects too vast or too remote for attainment, arrive at great practical advantages in the pursuit of their visionary good. This was in some degree the case with Henry, and undoubtedly would have been so to a greater extent had he not suffered his mind to be diverted to less praiseworthy endeavors. The peculiarities of his character, and the peculiarities of his situation, were great obstacles to the execution of many of his best designs. The man was always struggling against the monarch. His libidinous propensities, and his passion for gambling, led him not only into profusion and expense, but into indiscretion and injustice, which were not favorable either to social or financial reforms; and the state of the country was such, that in undertaking any great political operation, he had no firm foundation on which to rest: he had to form the very basis of

his enterprise, before he could execute it, and to remove a thousand obstacles, foreign and domestic, which had arisen from a long period of civil contention.

The waves of the sea remain agitated long after the storm has ceased, and the designs of Henry IV. for the good of his people were constantly interrupted by the turbulent spirit which had been engendered during the civil wars. The most famous conspiracy which disturbed the state, after the peace of Vervins, was that of Marshal Biron, whose inordinate vanity remained unsatisfied with all that his sovereign could do to reward his services, and whose first steps in treason we have already seen.

After the conclusion of the treaty of Savoy, the government of Bresse was added to that of Burgundy, and though Lesdiguieres was undoubtedly superior to Biron as a soldier, and had personally rendered much greater services to the state, yet the King, taking into consideration all that he owed to the father as well as the son, scattered favors upon the Duke with a much more lavish hand than upon his great rival. Nor was Biron more moved by warnings than he was affected by benefits. Henry himself, during the war against Savoy, having discovered that Beauvais la Nocle, Lord of Lafin, the intimate friend of the Marshal, and one who was known to be full of dissimulation, insincerity, and intrigue, was passing to and from the headquarters of Biron and the court of Savoy, sent for his

general, and remonstrated with him on his conduct, especially pointing out the danger of his intimacy with a person utterly unworthy of confidence. But Biron turned a deaf ear to the kind admonition of the King, and continued to trust in his deceitful confidant, and to carry on negotiations with the enemy. It is even said that he laid a plan for bringing Henry within musket range of the walls of Fort St. Catherine, while skilful marksmen were stationed near to pick him out, but that, suddenly moved by remorse, he prevented the execution of his own scheme.

During his visit to England, not only warning, but example, was set before Biron; and if we may believe the French accounts of his conference with Elizabeth, that sagacious woman addressed to him many observations on the dangers as well as the criminality of rebellion, which could be hardly accidental. She pointed out to him the fall of Essex, showed him the portrait of that unfortunate nobleman, and assured him that if she had been sovereign of France, Devereux's fate would have overtaken, long before, many of those who disturbed the peace of that kingdom. In order, it would appear, to mortify his vanity and diminish his high opinion of himself, Elizabeth is said to have declared in his presence, that if her brother of France had two Lesdiguieres, she would have asked him for one of them.

But her admonitions proved as vain as those of Henry. Biron still continued his intrigues with the

Spaniards, and with the Duke of Savoy, by the mediation of Lafin, who, shortly after the Duke's return from England, left him in Burgundy, and proceeded to Milan to confer with Fuentes, governor of that place for the King of Spain. The enmity of the whole Spanish nation towards France, and especially towards Henry IV. seemed concentrated in the person of Fuentes. He is strongly suspected by the French writers, of having instigated several of the attempts on that monarch's life; and he never lost any opportunity of making an inroad upon some part of his dominions; but he was, at the same time, a shrewd politician, possessing much knowledge of the world and insight into human character, and it would appear, that he soon understood the man with whom he had to deal, and placed no confidence in the honor and integrity of Lafin. After some consultation with the Duke of Savoy, it seems that Fuentes determined to employ very efficacious means of getting rid of Biron's deceitful negotiator. But Lafin was alive to every movement of those who surrounded him; and, finding that the Duke of Savoy had arrested his secretary, named Renazé,* he took flight from Italy, and passing through Switzerland, arrived in France.

* It does not appear certain that, even at this time, Lafin had not given intimation to Henry of Biron's designs. Perefix declares that he had; but the author of the Life of Marshal Biron, with greater probability, states that Lafin was induced to reveal the plot to the King by a discovery of the designs entertained against himself.

Lafin's resolution was now taken, to discover the whole design of the conspirators to the King; and, in order to obtain security for himself, he employed his nephew, the Vidame de Chartres, to negotiate with Henry, while he applied himself to obtain such convincing proofs of Biron's treason as to leave no doubt of the truth of his statements. He was already possessed of many letters from Biron on the subject of their mutual designs; but these epistles were written in such terms as to bear two interpretations, and something more decided was required to establish the Duke's guilt beyond all question. For this purpose Lafin again joined the Marshal in Burgundy; and knowing that the plan of the conspiracy, drawn up in Biron's own hand, was in the house, he represented to his victim that it was highly imprudent to keep such a document, and that it would be better to have it copied by another, so that he might disavow it in case of need. The Duke fell into the snare, gave Lafin the fatal document to transcribe in his presence, and laid down to rest upon his bed while it was done. Lafin copied the paper and then crushing in his hand another sheet which he had brought with him on purpose, he threw it in the fire, pretending it was the original, which he had dexterously slipped into his pocket.

Some suspicions with which Fuentes is supposed to have inspired the Duke, now induced Biron to treat his confidant with neglect, and to repose his secrets

in the breast of the Baron de Lux. He continued his intrigues with Savoy and Spain, however, even while employed by Henry on a mission to the Swiss; but was watched eagerly in all his proceedings by his betrayer; till the Vidame de Chartres, having spoken in favor of the latter to the King, Lafin was summoned to the court, which was then at Fontainebleau. The treacherous confidant of the Duke, by informing him of the King's orders, contrived to draw another letter from him, in which Biron gave him directions to burn all the papers he possessed, acknowledging that he had his life in his hands. Lafin then hastened to Fontainebleau, and in the course of several private interviews, which he had with Henry, he laid before him the whole scheme of conspiracy in Biron's own writing. Henry was now horrified to find that a regular plan had been formed for dismembering his empire, and exciting his people to revolt. Burgundy and La Bresse were to form a sovereignty for Biron, who was likewise to obtain the third daughter of the Duke of Savoy in marriage, with a dower of fifty thousand crowns. Provence and Dauphiné were to be the portion of the Duke of Savoy; a number of other noblemen were to receive divisions of France; and a powerful Spanish army was to enter the territories of the King, while the people in all parts of the kingdom were to take arms against his authority. It has been also insinuated that the life of Henry and the Dauphin were to be

attempted, but of this I find no proof. It is certain, however, that the small sovereignties proposed to be erected were to be held as fiefs of the crown of Spain.

Acting with extraordinary caution, Henry concealed the knowledge of these designs during a long journey he made into Poitou to quiet the malcontents in that province. But on his return to Fontainebleau, he sent messengers to Biron, commanding him to present himself at the court. His letter on that occasion was kind, but so, we are assured, were his intentions, and no man was ever of a more forgiving disposition. Biron endeavored to excuse himself from obeying his commands, and Henry somewhat irritated, despatched M. Descures, one of Biron's intimate friends, to tell him that if he did not make his appearance, the King would come to seek him in person. The President Jeannin was sent off almost as soon as Descures, to assure him of the King's good intentions towards him. The Duke now determined to obey, and notwithstanding several intimations that he was in danger, set out for Fontainebleau, where he arrived on the 13th of June. The King received him in the gardens, and embraced him, saying, "You have done well to come, otherwise I should have set out to seek you."

Henry then led him through the gardens, telling him the reports which had been circulated of him, beseeching him to make a fair confession of all that

had taken place, and promised him in that case a full pardon. But Biron, instead of being moved to repentance by the King's extraordinary kindness, became violent and insolent, saying, that he was innocent, and that he had not come there to justify himself, but to demand the name of his calumniators. In the course of the evening Henry again attempted to draw the truth from him, and having failed, directed the Count de Soissons to endeavor by every means to move him to repentance and confession. But Biron made as haughty an answer as before, and on the following morning he was seen in conversation with the King, striking his breast and using violent gesticulations, not of the most respectful kind. Still Henry hesitated to order his arrest, fully resolved, if he forced him to try and condemn him, that he should suffer the penalty of his crimes. On the following day the King made one more effort, promising him pardon and total oblivion of the past, if he confessed his fault; but finding him unmoved, he ordered him to be arrested, which was executed forthwith.

The Duke now showed as much consternation as he had before shown obstinacy, demanded to speak with the King, but was refused, and being disarmed, was led into one of the chambers of the castle under arrest. The Count d'Auvergne, who had taken part in the plot, was also arrested, as well as several others; and the two leaders were immediately conducted to the Bastille, while an order

was sent to the Parliament to prepare for their trial. A commission was issued for the purpose to the first president, Harlay, with Potier, Fleury, and Thurin,* and the proceedings were carried on with great rapidity.

Biron's defence was feeble and ill-conducted; he did not attempt to refute the testimony of Lafin; he acknowledged the plan of the conspiracy presented to him to be his own handwriting; and when Renazé, whom he believed imprisoned in Piedmont, was confronted with him, he remained in speechless consternation. After several examinations in the Bastille, he was brought before the Parliament; and, on the last day of July, 1602, he was sentenced to lose his head, in the Place de Grève, for the crime of high treason, and all his estates were to be confiscated to the crown. Great efforts were made to save him by the application of his friends, and he even implored Sully to intercede for him; but that nobleman would not venture to do so, and Henry steadily refused to interfere with the course of justice. As the hour of death approached, the Duke, who had so often faced the enemy in the field, showed a degree of weakness too painful to contemplate. He complained, he cried, he called down vengeance on the heads of his accusers; he interrupted continually the Chancellor, when he attempted to read to him the

* Bassompierre declares that Bellievre was one of the Commissioners, and does not name Potier.

sentence of death; he besought him to intercede for him with the King; he taxed Henry with ingratitude; he declared that his father had placed the crown on the King's head; and for nearly an hour he prevented the sentence from being read, and even while it was proceeding, he exclaimed loudly, and, perhaps truly, that the accusation of his having meditated the King's death was false.

The place of execution was changed by the King's order to the court of the Bastille, and at five o'clock in the evening, after having made his will, and performed his devotions, he was led to the scaffold, where he showed the same pusillanimity, threatening the executioner when he approached to cut his hair, and giving way to such violence, that it was with difficulty he was brought to submit to death with anything like decency. One of his guards, however, having been called, Biron permitted him to bandage his eyes, and turn up his hair: and his head was struck off at a single blow. The body was buried in the church of St. Paul, with little ceremony, but in the presence of an immense concourse of spectators, who wept his fate even while they detested his crime.

That the punishment of Biron was well merited, there cannot be the slightest doubt; nor did ever a suspicion of injustice rest upon the minds of his countrymen. Nevertheless universal abhorrence followed one who, not less criminal than himself, had proved himself more base, and whose guilt in

suggesting the treason, was rendered doubly detestable by his treachery in betraying it. We may as well follow to a close the career of Lafin, before we pursue the history of the persons concerned in the conspiracy. Although the unhappy Duke de Biron could not and did not attempt to deny the facts urged against him by his denunciator, yet when confronted with him, the prisoner charged the witness with every kind of crime, imaginary and real, and it would appear that sufficient was established against him to have rendered his testimony of very little value, had it not been fully confirmed by other circumstances. Lafin not only obtained from Henry a general pardon for all offences, but permission to travel with a sort of guard of fifteen or twenty armed men, asserting, it would appear with truth, that the friends and relations of Biron had threatened him, and that some of them had bound themselves to put him to death whenever an occasion presented itself. No attempt was made for some years to execute this menace; but vengeance only slept: and on the 20th April, 1606, Lafin, trusting that resentment was forgotten, went to Paris almost unattended, to solicit the King's favor for his son, who had been committed to the Conciergerie on account of some offence. As he was passing on horseback by the end of the bridge of Notre Dame however, in the middle of the day, he was met by a party of twelve men mounted and armed, with pistols in their hands, who instantly

attacked him, knocked him from his horse, and fired a volley of pistol shots at him as he lay. Then, seeing that their object was effected, they turned their horses heads, and with a naked sword in one hand and pistol and bridle in the other, traversed the whole town without let or hindrance; nor was any pursuit or inquiry instituted for four and twenty hours after the event. Henry at the time was absent from Paris,* or probably more activity might have been displayed by his officers; nevertheless it is but just to admit, that the police of the capital was in a state of frightful inefficiency, so that in the short space of three days, in a city so small as Paris then was, no less than seven crimes of the deepest dye were committed by persons moving in the higher classes of society; of which number three passed without punishment.

The principal accomplices of the Duke were permitted to escape, after a slight punishment, with the exception of the Baron de Fontenelles, who was proved even to have exceeded Biron in criminality, and was consequently broken on the wheel.

The Duke of Bouillon, who was implicated in the conspiracy, and who had been previously accused of spreading disaffection in the realm, and betraying his trust as a general in the field, acted with more caution and prudence than the unhappy Biron. He retired first into his Viscounty

* He was at that time on his march from Sedan.

of Turenne, avoiding the presence of the King, while the monarch's anger was yet inflamed, and then made his escape, on a fresh summons to Court, taking refuge amongst the States on the Rhine. To pursue his history to the close of Henry's reign, before I leave the subject, it may be necessary to state briefly, that he very soon made his peace with the King, and was allowed to return to his fortress of Sedan, where he did not remain long ere he entered into fresh intrigues against the government. At his instigation the Protestants of the south of France recommenced their murmurs at Henry's devotion to the Roman Catholics. The populace were excited by secret emissaries, who promised them deliverance from taxation; other means were employed to rouse the passions of the nobility; and there can be no doubt that Bouillon now resumed his favorite project, which he had first formed as Vicomte de Turenne, of uniting the provinces on the south of the Loire into a great federal republic. That he treated secretly with Spain is also certain; and his connexion with the parties who had entered into the conspiracy of Biron, was never broken off. Amongst those conspirators, one of the principal was the Count d'Auvergne, who had received letters of abolition for the part he had taken in that affair, and had been restored by the interest of his half sister, Henriette d'Entragues, to the favor of the King. With Henriette, the Count, and Monsieur d'Entragues himself, Bouillon carried on his in-

trigues; and although it is very difficult to discover to what point they reached, it is quite certain that they were highly criminal. At the same time, the insolence of the King's mistress towards his wife, her continual recurrence to the promise of marriage which she held in her hands, her known infidelity to him she affected to love, and the caprices she displayed to obtain her objects, produced the most terrible dissensions at the court; and Mary de Medicis, by disposition irritable and petulant, alienated from herself the affection of Henry, which she might have conciliated by a gentler demeanor. In the month of June, 1604, the Count d'Auvergne, taking advantage of a dispute with the Count de Soissons, absented himself from the court, and is supposed to have passed some time in negotiating with the Spaniards. Undoubtedly the promise of marriage given by Henry to his half sister was shown to the Spanish Ambassador, and her father proposed to retire with her into Spain, in order to obtain the assistance of Philip III. in placing her children on the throne, instead of the legitimate descendants of the King; and it is said, that Balthazar Cuniga promised, on the part of his master, to furnish a large sum of money for the support of her claims, and to cause the Spanish army in Catalonia to advance into the south of France the moment the people of those provinces took arms at the call of the Duke of Bouillon. This project was discovered; and d'Entragues and his daughter

were arrested in Paris. The Count was apprehended in Auvergne, after having received new letters of abolition, bearing on their face the condition that he should appear immediately at the court, which he failed to do. D'Entragues, Auvergne, and one of their accomplices named Morgan, an Englishman, were handed over for trial to the Parliament; and the two first were speedily condemned to death. Henriette herself was tried, after Henry had in vain endeavored to make her humble herself to him and to the Queen, and received sentence of imprisonment in the convent of Beaumont, near Tours. Henry, however, interfered, love joining its influence to the natural gentleness of his heart. The punishment of d'Entragues and Auvergne was commuted to perpetual imprisonment, which was afterwards changed in favor of the former, into exile from the capital. Henriette was permitted to retire from the court, and afterwards was declared innocent. But the Count d'Auvergne, doubtless the most guilty of the party, was long detained in prison. His county, on which Marguerite de Valois had some just claims, was afterwards adjudged by the Parliament to that Princess, who transferred it to the Dauphin, on condition that it should never be separated from the crown of France.*

In the course of these proceedings, the intrigues of Bouillon were fully developed, and it was clearly proved that he had distributed money, exacted

* De Thou.

illegal oaths, and laid schemes for the capture of several important towns. Henry thought fit to provide, in the first place, for the security of the southern provinces, and at once sent one of his officers, James de Mesmes, to Limoges, to try the conspirators. He himself followed, in the month of September; and the execution of a few of the most guilty was sufficient to crush the dangerous plot which had been formed against him.

Although the schemes of Bouillon had been made clear, no evidence sufficient to convict him of high treason had been discovered; and Henry, though justly offended, endeavored by every means in his power, to humble his audacious subject, without actually taking arms against him. Negotiations were commenced and continued till March, 1606, when, wearied with the intrigues and duplicity of the Duke, the King, having caused extensive preparations to be made, commenced his march for Sedan, at the head of a powerful army, well provided with artillery. The fortress, however, was strong, fully supplied, and garrisoned; the King dreaded the renewal of civil war; and many of his council advised him strongly to avoid such an extremity. But Henry resolutely declared, that nothing but death should prevent him from making himself master of Sedan; and his resolution having been made known to the Duke by some of his friends, Bouillon at length yielded so far as to agree to receive the monarch in the town, to ask pardon for his offences,

and to give up the citadel to the troops of the King for four years. With this act of submission Henry contented himself. He received the Duke with kindness when he came to visit him at Donchery, and Bouillon was too wise to provoke him farther.

The conspiracy of the Duke of Biron, notwithstanding the severe example which his punishment afforded, was followed by many other treasonable proceedings which I have not yet mentioned, but of which it is necessary to give some account. Scarcely a year passed without its plot; and one of the first which was discovered was that of Claude de Lorraine, Prince de Joinville (afterwards Duc de Chevreuse,) who, having first enjoyed the favor of the Marquise de Verneuil, was discovered by his own indiscretion, and saved by the complaisance of the King for his mistress. He then with boyish facility plunged into intrigues with Spain; but Henry treated him as a child, at least in treason, and, confiding him to the guard of his brother, the Duke of Guise, exacted that he should be sent to travel in foreign lands.

The next act of treason that appears upon the list is that of Oste, the god-son and one of the secretaries of Villeroy. The discovery of his crime was brought about in a curious manner; and it may be necessary to enter more into detail regarding this transaction than its general importance would seem to justify, on account of the suspicion which it cast upon a celebrated statesman of those

days, and which has never been entirely removed. Towards the end of 1603 Henry received a private communication from his ambassador in Spain, Elneric Gobier de Barrault, cautioning him to beware of the clerks employed in the different offices connected with the foreign affairs of the kingdom, and especially in that of the Secretary of State, Villeroy, inasmuch as the most secret despatches addressed to the embassy were known at the court of Madrid, sometimes before they reached the hands of the ambassador himself. Other envoys made the same complaint, and it was evident that treachery existed somewhere; but it was long ere the offender could be discovered.

At length a French refugee of the name of Legré, or Leyré, de Rafis, who had been one of the most obnoxious partizans of the League, and had in consequence been excluded from the amnesty on Henry's entrance into Paris, addressed himself to Barrault, and informed him, that he had discovered the means by which the secrets of the French court were made known to Spain, and would communicate them to him upon the following conditions: that he would obtain his pardon from the King and a small pension, if the intelligence he gave proved true, and that, in writing to France upon the subject of his proposal, the letter should be sent direct to the King himself.

Barrault agreed to the terms as far as he was himself concerned, but did not exactly keep his

word. He knew that Rafis had been employed since his arrival in Spain to maintain the communication between that court and the remnant of the old League, and might thus have obtained important intelligence; and he therefore wrote at once for the pardon and the pension; but he treated the promise to address himself to the King direct, with foolish negligence, and consequently sent his letter to Villeroy.

The conduct of Villeroy on receiving it, proves beyond doubt that he had no share in, or cognizance of the treachery which was carried on in his own office. He instantly obtained the pardon and the pension for Rafis, and without delay sent off the documents concerning them to Spain. But on receiving them Rafis perceived at once Barrault's indiscretion; for the pardon was not countersigned by Lomenie, through whose hands it would have passed, if the communication had been made privately to the King; and perfectly certain that the criminal would take means to have him put out of the way, he hurried to the French ambassador, and told him a tale which at once showed the folly he had committed. Nicolas Oste or Hôte, the godson of Villeroy, had, in extreme youth, accompanied Barrault's predecessor, the Count of Rochepot, to Madrid, as his secretary, and had soon established a connexion with the Spanish Secretaries of State, which ended in his receiving a Spanish pension, and in return communicating to them the contents

of his master's despatches from France. On Rochepot's recall, the young man received an appointment in the office of Villeroy, and there carried on with greater scope and facility, the treacherous conduct he had commenced in Madrid. Rafis soon found that his minor communications from the old Leaguers were no longer valued, naturally concluded that he had a rival of greater opportunities than himself, and in the spirit of jealousy and revenge, applied all his genius for intrigue to discover who that rival was. He first arrived at the fact that the correspondence of the Count de Rochepot had been copied by his secretary for the Spanish ministers, and next that this very secretary had since been placed high in the office of Villeroy. Other discoveries followed, till the case became clear; and Rafis then made his first proposal to the French Ambassador.

When all this was communicated to Barrault, he perceived the indiscretion he had fallen into, and the dangerous position in which he had placed Rafis. The life or liberty of the latter was in peril every moment; and all that remained was to send him out of Spain without an instant's delay. Putting him under the charge of Descartes, his secretary, the Ambassador ordered them both to mount on horseback and gallop without loss of time to the frontier; nor were they a moment too soon; for Oste, having opened the letters from Spain with Villeroy, and read the application of Barrault for the pardon of

Rafis, with the grounds upon which it was founded, concluded that a part at least of his intrigues was discovered, and wrote to his correspondents in Spain to remove his dangerous countryman. The morning after Rafis had set out, his lodging was surrounded and searched by order of the police, and he was pursued in all diligence to the frontier; but he had lost no time by the way, and arrived with his companion in safety upon the soil of France.

It so happened that, on the road to Fontainebleau, they overtook Villeroy, and communicated to him their errand, urging him to cause the immediate arrest of Oste, whom he had left behind in Paris. But the minister neglected their advice, replying that his treacherous secretary was to follow him in a day or two to Fontainebleau, and it would be time enough to secure him then. He neglected, however, to do so, till Oste, after reaching the palace, had received intelligence that two couriers had lately arrived from Spain, one being the secretary of the ambassador at that Court. Instantly concluding that he was discovered, the unfortunate young man fled with a Spaniard who had accompanied him from Paris, Villeroy having again afforded time for his evasion, by a very culpable neglect of the King's orders for his instant apprehension. He was hotly pursued, however, to the banks of the river Marne, in which river his dead body was found, while the Spaniard, his companion, was taken at the water side. The story told by the

prisoner was, that Oste had attempted to swim the stream, and had been drowned; but the surgeons who examined the body, declared that it offered no traces of that kind of death.*

Such was the treason of this youth, and his fate, as far as it is known. Strong suspicion of betraying the secrets of the state fell upon Villeroy; and he gave himself up to despair; for this was not the first occasion on which doubts had been cast upon his fidelity. That he had any part in the treachery of Oste,† is not to be believed; for it is certain that he instantly communicated Barrault's information to the King; but that affection for a young man whose family had been attached to him for years, induced him to connive at the criminal's escape, is more than probable. He received consolation, however, where he had least right to expect it: Henry, to show his unabated confidence, visited him in person, and the Secretary has published a defence of his own character; but history is not yet convinced that he was at all times faithful to his employers. Two plots were then exposed, one devised by a gentleman named Merargues, and another by two Italians, for the purpose of delivering Marseilles, Narbonne, and Leucate, to the Spaniards. The criminals were executed, and the Secretary of the Spanish Ambassador was imprisoned, but shortly afterwards liberated, though not

* Compare Sully and l'Etoile.

† I find this name written Oste, Hoste, l'Ote and l'Hote.

without an intimation from Henry that diplomatists who carried on intrigues against a monarch to whose court they are accredited, deprive themselves of all claim to a character, which is held sacred by all civilized nations.

On the very day of the execution of Merargues, another attempt was made upon the King's life, as he was crossing the Pont Neuf on horseback; but the assassin who endeavored to stab him was proved to be a lunatic, and was treated accordingly.

An attempt to investigate the claims of persons holding annuities on the Hotel de Ville, many of which had been iniquitously acquired, produced a degree of agitation amongst the people of the capital which had nearly run into revolt. Miron, the Prevôt des Marchands, an honest and loyal subject, headed the resistance, and, carried away by his zeal, harangued the citizens in terms almost seditious. Not contented with showing that, as these annuities had frequently changed hands since they had been first obtained, so that an act of great injustice would be committed if they were now declared forfeit, he attacked all those who had suggested the investigation, and Sully himself was not spared by his eloquence. Many of the courtiers sought to persuade the King to punish him; but Henry treated the question with his usual good sense, acknowledged the justice of the remonstrances addressed to him by the people, and abandoned the proceedings which had created so much irritation.

To the outcry raised against his minister, Sully, he paid not the slightest attention. Satisfied of his honesty, of his ability, and his attachment, he passed over a bluntness which was not without its mixture of vanity, and rewarded his services as much as they merited, though, as Péréfix has justly observed, he never degraded the minister to the station of favorite, or forgot the duty of the King in the affection of the friend.

At a period still further back, in 1603, the dissensions between the people of Metz and their Governor induced Henry to hurry to the spot in person. M. de Sobole, who had been placed as Lieutenant-Governor in that important town by the Duke of Epernon, had contrived to obtain the royal confirmation of his appointment, by which he rendered himself independent of a haughty master. But a grasping spirit then took possession of him, which soon drove the citizens into revolt. Henry, in the first instance, despatched the Duke, as the Governor, to restore peace; but Sobole refused to evacuate the citadel or admit Epernon, and the latter, taking part with the people, urged them on to acts of violence. The presence of Henry, however, soon brought Sobole to obedience; and, finding that the citizens, the Duke, and the Lieutenant-Governor, had each views upon Metz incompatible with good order and tranquillity, he placed in the castle and city two gentlemen on whom he could rely, and, after a visit to his sister, the

Duchess of Bar, at Nancy, returned to Paris. Not long after, he received the news of Catherine's death, and domestic annoyances thronged quick upon him.

The sharp and irritable temper of the Queen was kept in continual agitation by the scandalous excesses of her husband, and his amours with Jacqueline de Beuil, whom he created Countess de Morêt; with Charlotte des Essarts, by whom he had two daughters, and less public intrigues with many of the ladies of the court, not only excited Mary to a high degree of fury, but were amongst the causes of the conspiracy of the family of Entragues.

The quarrels between the King and Queen were fomented by one of her Italian attendants, named Leonora Galigai, afterwards married to Concini, who acquired a name in history as the Marèchal d'Ancre; and this bad woman had the boldness to surround the King with spies, to carry the tidings of all his proceedings to her mistress, and to act the part of a domestic fiend, embittering the whole course of Henry's existence. The King's resource was amusement; and hunting, building, the gaming table, and pageants, went hand-in-hand with a close attention to business. Nowhere did he appear to so little advantage as in his own court, where all his weaknesses were displayed in the strongest light, while the higher qualities of his heart and mind, like all great objects, were best seen from a distance.

Foreign nations had now learned to love, respect,

and admire, the French sovereign, and he exercised a powerful influence over all the adjacent states. The once Protestant monarch of France raised Alexander de Medicis, who had gained his esteem by moderation and prudence, to the papal throne. The Genevese having entered into hostilities with the Duke of Savoy, on account of an attempt to take their city by escalade; were calmed by the voice of their great neighbor, and consented at once to a peace. By his mediation, the Pope and the city of Venice were reconciled, after a fierce contention, and a negotiation of years. Much greater difficulties however were encountered in bringing about even a truce between the Court of Spain and the Archduke Albert on the one part, and the United Provinces on the other, though Henry labored zealously to effect that object, while he supported the States in their just struggle against Spain.

The death of Elizabeth of England in 1603, had thrown serious obstacles in the way of the French monarch. To a firm and powerful Princess, steady and determined in her purposes, clear-sighted and rapid in her judgment, succeeded one of the weakest, vainest, and most vicious Princes in Europe.* Sully was sent to negotiate with the feeble monarch, and accomplished his object after many difficulties

* In the negotiations which took place between France and England, Henry had cause to feel the truth of the satirical verses:

"Rex fuit Elizabeth, et nunc Regina Jacobus
Error naturæ sic in utroque fuit."

and delays; but weakness can never be trusted, and a few months saw James formally ally himself to Spain, and virtually abandon the cause of freedom in the Low Countries.

It would appear that the Spanish diplomatists carried on the negotiations at the Court of England with the greatest skill and art. The principal object was to detach James from his alliance with Henry, and to induce him to withhold all assistance from the United Provinces; and they found in the British monarch's love of peace a useful auxiliary, which overpowered all considerations of reason, justice, and good faith. At the same time, captious negotiations were carried on with the States of Holland, and an affected respect for the views and interests of the King of France was maintained even in the conferences with the English ministers. James endeavored to persuade Henry that the proposed treaty between Great Britain and the Court of Madrid, was in no degree adverse to that which already existed between France and England. He found no little difficulty, however, in convincing the French monarch and his ministers that the two acts were not completely at variance; but nevertheless he proceeded to sign the convention with Spain, and the Constable of Castille, on his return towards Madrid, passed through Paris, and obtained an audience of Henry, in order, it would appear, to lay a foundation for future negotiations, having for their object to deprive the United Provinces of the support of France also.

It would be tedious to pursue the course of all the intrigues of the Spanish Government for the purpose of leaving those rich possessions in the north, which had revolted against the tyranny of Philip, without any ally amongst the great powers of Europe. They were cunning, extensive, and persevering; but in order completely to isolate the United Provinces from the sympathies of other states, it became necessary to make it appear that the Dutch had arrived at the end of that long and arduous struggle, which had excited so much interest both in France and England. With this view, overtures were made to the States General, for a recognition of their sovereignty and independence, upon very moderate conditions, and no means, which the most astute policy could devise, were neglected to lull the suspicions of other states, and gradually and easily to separate both France and England from all connexion with a people who were now represented as secure against farther danger. The ambassador of Spain, at the Court of James, applied himself with success to seduce both the King and the Court. During the months of May and June, 1608, he distributed amongst those accessible to such influences, the sum of a hundred and fifty thousand crowns. Gloves, perfumes, and jewels, won the favor of the ladies of the Court; the people's jealousy was adroitly excited against the commercial enterprise of the Dutch, and the ears of the King were tickled with the project of a marriage between the Infanta and the Prince of Wales, while his

prejudices were won by representing the revolt of the United Provinces as a horrible infraction of the divine right of kings. The great obstacle which remained at the Court of England, and which could never be overcome, was the abhorrence of Henry Prince of Wales for the Spanish character and religion, and his determined opposition to the weak and timid views of his father. So long as he lived, the ultra Protestant party in England found a rallying point, round which were concentrated all the sympathies of the English with the Dutch, and all their abhorrence for a Roman Catholic alliance.

But if anxious to cultivate the friendship of England, Spain was infinitely more desirous, as she well might be, of obtaining the amity of France. The weakness of the British monarch, his pacific disposition, his ruinous extravagance, and his monarchical prejudices, rendered it little probable that he should have either power or inclination to give available assistance to the neighboring Republic, or prove dangerous in any way to the Court of Spain. Not so however with Henry IV. He had already afforded the strongest support to the United Provinces, sending annually for several years two millions of livres to assist them in their struggle for independence, and his power and his views were extending in every direction, so that the House of Austria saw itself in danger on the Pyrenees, in Flanders, and in Italy, at the same time. The lesser Princes of Germany, aided and directed by Henry, were forming themselves into a league to

resist the overgrown and burdensome power of the Emperor; the versatile Duke of Savoy had become the warmest ally of France, the enemy of Spain, and the proposer of an enterprise for driving the Austrians out of Upper Italy; the finances of France were every day improving, the treasury was full, and great military preparations, the object of which was not seen, were slowly but steadily advancing to a point which would render France the arbiter of the destinies of Europe.

Henry was an enemy undoubtedly to be feared, and the state of Spain at this time was by no means such as to render it expedient for her monarch to seek at once hostile rather than pacific means, of dealing with a sovereign who had already triumphed over all her arts, and fixed himself firmly upon a throne, from which she had attempted to exclude him. The successful resistance of the United Provinces, a recent victory which they had obtained at sea, and the great preparations, with small results, made by Spain, had tarnished the lustre of her arms; but notwithstanding the immense wealth which flowed into her treasury, the state was too deeply in debt, and the finances in too disorderly a condition to admit of any great effort to recover her military reputation, unless vigorously supported by other powers. But the German branch of the House of Austria, was itself enfeebled by the fraternal war, and surrounded by difficulties; while in Bohemia, Transylvania, and on the Rhine,

clouds were gathering, which ere many years passed, broke in the storm of the thirty years' war. The Pope was no longer the servile tool of Spain, though undoubtedly looking with a favorable eye upon a throne which had been the constant and best support of the Papacy. Borghese it is true was less likely to link himself with France than Medici who preceded him; but he had received a lesson in his dispute with the Venetian Senate, which was certain to deter him from showing any hostility to the French monarch; and, thrown upon her own means, Spain found herself totally incompetent to contend with a country, the resources of which are almost inexhaustible, and whose only great weakness was some internal divisions which were rapidly disappearing, under the firm and equitable rule of Henry IV.

Philip III. might well view the relative state of the two countries with alarm, and pursue perhaps with sincerity, the overtures which he had at first made for the purpose of deceit, to a more perfect reconciliation between the crowns of France and Spain. Two events which occurred towards the year 1608, hastened his efforts to accomplish that object. A defensive treaty with the states of the United Provinces, was signed by Henry in January of that year; and about the same time, it became known at Madrid, that a still stricter alliance was likely to take place between France and Savoy, by the marriage of Henry's eldest daughter to the son

and heir of the Duke. Already the means of corruption and intrigue had been employed, not altogether in vain. Gold, there is reason to believe, from one of Villeroy's letters, was scattered about the streets of Paris as profusely as in the court of London; and the Italians who surrounded and governed the wilful and indignant Queen, were undoubtedly the faithful servants of the most Catholic King. The divisions between the husband and wife were widened by Concini and Galigai, in order to maintain their own influence; and the secrets which Henry sometimes was weak enough to entrust to the Queen's keeping, were rapidly transmitted by her favorites to the Court of Spain. The Protestants, there are many causes for supposing, were stimulated to murmur, to menace, and to embarrass the King's Government, by the suggestions of their old and most pertinacious enemies; and the Catholics were taught to encourage his extravagance, and facilitate his pursuit of pleasure, in order to diminish his means, and to lull him into inactivity.

The defensive treaty with Holland, and the proposed alliance with Savoy, however, required more decided and open measures. It was determined then at the Court of Madrid, early in the year 1608, to send an Ambassador Extraordinary to France, to treat of an intimate alliance between the two crowns, to be cemented by the marriage of the children of Henry and Philip.

Spain has in almost all ages had an Infanta in

reserve as a bait for France; and a great deal of the diplomacy of the world has turned upon royal marriages; but even at a period so remote as that of which I write, there were statesmen wise enough to perceive inconveniences, and even dangers, in alliances of ambition. Thus Sully, who attributes to Spain the first proposal of the marriage between the Dauphin and a Spanish Princess,* in 1603, observed, in an answer which he made to the King upon that occasion: "It is not a mark of such good policy as is generally supposed, to marry the males of the house of France into houses nearly equal, such as that of Spain. Not only is there no alliance, however close it may be, which does not yield to the hatred which ambition inspires against a rival; but the advantages which one might expect from such unions are rendered null, by the very fact that they might become too considerable."

The embassy being determined, the next care of the Duke of Lerma was to choose a person who would both give dignity to the post of ambassador by his station, his wealth, and his manners, and carry through the delicate negotiations intrusted to him, with skill and discretion. The Court of Spain was not so happy on this occasion as it frequently

* M. de Fréville, in his excellent pamphlet upon the Embassy of Don Pedro, seems to believe that the first proposal emanated from France. I may be permitted to doubt the fact, as it would appear that such an alliance was totally opposed to Henry's admitted views for the depression of the house of Austria.

was in its selection of an ambassador for England. Instead of a subtle, pliant, and dexterous diplomatist, like Gondomir, always ready to suit himself to circumstances, to caress the classical platitudes of James, to answer with an epigram when he could not reply with a reason, to foster the exaggerated enthusiasm of Charles, and outdo the extravagances of Buckingham; a proud and ostentatious, though firm and clever grandee, was chosen for a task which would have required a most finished negotiator to bring it to a successful issue. Too courtly to be frank on some points, too haughty to be courteous on all, too punctilious to be easy of access, and too loose in his notions to be always dignified in his actions, Don Pedro de Toledo Ossorio, Marquis of Villa Franca and Duke of Ferandina, though a brave soldier, an estimable man, and by no means without talent as a negotiator, was little suited to treat with the clear-sighted and straightforward King of France, or to please a light and volatile court.

It would seem, however, that Henry heard with some emotion, that so important a personage was about to visit him on a special mission; and he hastened to recall the President Jeannin from the Hague, that he might take part in the conferences about to ensue. We find from a letter of Villeroy, addressed to Jeannin, who was obliged by storms to put back to a port in Holland, that the Court of Henry was made aware

of the principal objects of Don Pedro's embassy before his arrival, and that though the ostensible purpose of his journey was to negotiate a marriage treaty, the great and real end thereof was to detach Henry completely from his alliance with the United Provinces. The triple marriage of the children of France and Spain was to be the inducement offered to Henry; his consent to the subjugation of the Dutch, the object to be attained by Spain. "The Spaniards hope to engage our master," writes Villeroy to Jeannin, "if not to join with theirs, at least substantially to abandon the States. They declare that if the States are not succored, Spain will be able to get the better of them in three years, having succeeded during the negotiations, in discovering the weak points of the United Provinces. To this end has been turned the proposal of sovereignty with which they cunningly enchanted Barneveld and his adherents."* It would appear that Villeroy himself, and the Chancellor Sillery were induced to support the views of Spain with the King, while Sully and Jeannin opposed them. But the character of Henry was not at all propitious to views which implied a manifest and disgraceful breach of faith on his own part, and the dereliction of his engagements towards a people who had aided him in time of need, and ever engaged his warmest sympathies.

* I am indebted for this letter to the interesting pamphlet of M. de Fréville.

It was determined at the Court of France to give the Ambassador Extraordinary from Spain a brilliant reception, both on account of his political character and his relationship to Mary de Medici. Nothing met his eyes after his entrance into France, in the middle of June, but splendor and rejoicing. Three hundred mounted gentlemen met him at the distance of two leagues from Bayonne; every town through which he passed was in holiday garb for his approach; at the commencement of the forest of Fontainebleau he was received by Marshal Brissac, and the royal carriages were in waiting to convey him to the palace, the alleys were lined with guards, and the courts and windows alive with spectators.

If Don Pedro was deceived by these appearances of respect, which at all times are very insignificant, he was not fitted for the task he had undertaken. Persifflage mingles more or less with every thing in France, and satire was already busy amongst the crowd that witnessed his arrival; but neither the magnificence of his reception by the Court, nor the ridicule which was attempted to be thrown upon his embassy by some of the people, could give the slightest indication of the probable results of his negotiation. The decision was in the breast of the King, and the views he entertained must be considered by the few lights that we have to guide us. The proposals of Don Pedro seem to have been, to unite the heir of the Spanish monarchy with the eldest daughter of Henry, the Dauphin with one of

the Infantas, and the second son of Philip with the second daughter of the French monarch, assuring to the latter couple the investiture of the Low Countries after the death of the Archduke and the Infanta his wife without children; by which means the sovereignty of those countries would be separated from the crown of Spain. His principal demand was, that France should, in the meantime, withdraw her protection from the United Provinces, and for this demand he could urge the pretext that it was necessary to reduce them, by some means, to agree to that article of the proposed treaty, which should convey the sovereignty of the Low Countries to the Spanish Prince and his French bride. The scheme was rather coarse, the intended deceit somewhat too manifest; but still it opened the way for negotiation; and in those days it was not considered indecent to be *detected* in fraudulent diplomacy.

That Henry felt himself flattered by an embassy so important, and that he was eager, if consistent with his honor, to ally the house of Bourbon to that of Austria, by the proposed marriages, is evident from the denials given by his ministers to the Court of England, that such marriages were in agitation, and by the anger which they attributed to him on hearing the objects of Don Pedro's mission.* Such deceits have never been considered disgraceful by French diplomatists; and it has often been found useful to read their assurances in the reverse sense.

* De Fréville.

Two days after the arrival of the ambassador, he was admitted to a private audience of the King. Nobody witnessed what passed between them; and therefore it is necessary to reject all the detailed accounts of this interview which we have received from contemporary historians. Neither do we find anything but the general results in the letters and despatches of the time, as far as I have had an opportunity of investigating their contents. Pierre Matthieu and Le Grain perhaps, from conversations with the King, might have obtained some insight into the more minute facts; and I propose to give, somewhat farther on, several anecdotes which they furnish, though I by no means feel sure of their accuracy.

The object of Henry undoubtedly was, to fix the Spanish ambassador down by a treaty to the proposals made by Spain regarding the marriages, upon such terms as would leave his good faith inviolate towards the United Provinces: the object of Don Pedro, to detach the King of France from the Dutch alliance, thus gaining a substantial advantage, and not to give anything but general promises in return. Seeking these two great ends, the first conferences passed probably in a good deal of fencing on both parts; but it is evident that they must have terminated amicably at least, as Spain did not fail to publish that the alliance between herself and France was already arranged. Henry, however, was far from yielding to the views of the Spanish ambassa-

dor, and writes about this time to Monsieur de Brèves, "Neither Don Pedro, nor any one else, ought to hope that in order to conclude these marriages, I am capable of doing anything unworthy of myself, which would be the case if I were to relinquish the alliance with Holland, after having contracted it to promote and favor peace. It would be a signal act of baseness, and would render the marriages themselves both infamous and unfortunate."

It is probable, however, that before the second interview between the French King and the Spanish Ambassador came to a close, Henry had completely fathomed the designs, and discovered the insincerity of Spain; and that, knowing her real weakness better than she did herself, he was fully convinced that her means were inadequate to force the United Provinces to the course she desired. At the same time, it would appear that he was not a little offended by the rumor industriously spread by the Spaniards, that an alliance was completed, which was only just distinctly proposed, and inferring therefrom that one object of Spain was to create suspicion of his conduct in foreign cabinets, and especially in the States of the Low Countries, he came to a rapid decision on the propositions of Spain, and addressed himself to remove the doubts which she had but too successfully labored to raise up.

The decision so speedily announced by the King, was simply not to listen to anything more till the

treaty between Spain and the United Provinces was either concluded, or the negotiations concerning it were entirely broken off; but at the same time he promised the Spanish envoy to use his mediation with the States, to obtain their consent to the free exercise of the Roman Catholic religion in Holland, and to induce them to accede to the terms proposed by Spain, in regard to their commerce with the East Indies. In the end, he made one more concession, namely, to rest satisfied on his own part with a convention of truce between Spain and the United Provinces, instead of a treaty of peace, provided a clause was inserted in the convention, formally acknowledging the sovereignty of the Provinces.

So far all was liberal, just, and generous; but the letters of Villeroy and Jeannin clearly show two important facts: first, that the secret proposal of Spain tended not only to secure the neutrality of Henry in the struggle between that country and the United Provinces, but to engage him in actual hostility against those with whom he had so lately concluded a defensive treaty; for we find that after Henry's decision was announced, Don Pedro attempted to shake it, by proposing that all places taken by the *combined forces* of France and Spain, should be placed in the hands of a third party: secondly, that Henry, in consenting to a truce, did not forget his own particular interest, and grasped somewhat too eagerly at the prospect of establishing

his second daughter in Flanders. The President Jeannin thus explains the views of his master, and produces a suspicion of duplicity which the mind is unwilling to receive: "It is for the best to make a truce, with a declaration of sovereignty; for, if the Spaniards should not conclude the alliance and separation which they have proposed, the United Provinces will still remain separate from Spain, his Majesty giving a hand; and we will not, nevertheless, cease from seeking that which is desired, as efficaciously as if this declaration of liberty had not been inserted."

Are we to suppose then, that Henry IV. had only in view to aid the separation of the United Provinces from Spain for the purpose of transferring them to a branch of his own family? Well might the States be suspicious of a negotiation where such proposals were listened to, and such views entertained, by the ally on whose friendship they had the best grounds for reliance.

Very shortly after the King's decision was announced to Don Pedro, Henry seems to have ceased all personal communication with him on political subjects; and the envoy complains in his letters to the Court of Madrid, that the French King related their conversations to every one who chose to listen. It is probable that this ostentation of publicity was by no means accidental, and had for its cause the unfair use which Spain had made of the first private interviews between the King and the ambassador.

Doubtless, it was by no means agreeable to Don Pedro to have the conversations between himself and Henry made public to the whole Court of France, if they were of the very sharp and pungent qualities described by contemporaries. Although the sallies of both the King and himself, as they appear in historians, far past the limits of courtesy and even decency, I am inclined to believe that such repartees were actually made, by finding that some of them are reported in Don Pedro's correspondence. It is stated, that in showing the Spanish ambassador the Bastille, Henry informed him that it contained wherewithal to keep up an army without holding back two-thirds of its pay, as was done in Flanders.

On another occasion, when Henry was walking over the Palace of Fontainebleau with his good cousin, as he was pleased to call the Spanish ambassador, he asked his opinion of the building, in which various alterations and improvements were in progress. "I find no one so badly lodged as God, Sire;" replied Don Pedro: upon whom Henry is said to have retorted sharply, "We, the French, lodge God in our hearts, not between four walls, as you Spaniards; and I doubt, moreover, whether, if he were in your hearts, he would not still be lodged in stones."

Shortly after the arrival of the Spanish nobleman, L'Etoile tells us, the King inquired if he were satisfied with his treatment, adding in a courteous tone,

"I fear that you are not received as well as you deserve to be."

"I am so well received, Sire," replied Don Pedro, "that I am grieved to see difficulties, which may cause me to come back with an army, which would not make me so well received."

"Come, when it shall please your master," answered the King; "you shall not, on that account, be personally less welcome; and for the rest, your master himself and all his forces will find some impediments on the frontier, which perhaps I shall not afford him leisure to see."

This was a curious sort of diplomacy, if there be any truth in these anecdotes; but it is certain that the boast of Henry, regarding the contents of the Bastille, is mentioned in one of Don Pedro's letters, and might well be received as an intentional insult, unworthy of a great monarch, unless provoked by some outrageous assumption on the part of the haughty Spaniard. And yet the general tone of Don Pedro was apparently very different, as is proved by his well known reply to those who were sent to compliment him on his arrival, by the Queen of France. Her message was addressed to *her cousin*, in which relationship Don Pedro really stood towards her; but the Ambassador immediately, we are told, bent the knee, replying: "The Queen has only great Kings and powerful Princes for her relations. It would be my greatest pride to be acknowledged by her Majesty as the most humble of her servants."

It is not very evident why the stay of Don Pedro was prolonged for many months in the dominions of the King of France, after he had received the definitive answer of that monarch; but it is clear that it became a matter of doubt and suspicion to Henry himself, and that the reception of the Spanish plenipotentiary grew more and more cold. The ministers of the King, especially Jeannin, attributed to him very sinister views; and there is a remarkable passage in the President's letters, cited by M. de Fréville, which shews the opinion of one of the most clear-sighted men in France, as to the objects of his mission. "The embassy of Don Pedro," says Jeannin, in a letter to Villeroy, dated 7th October, 1608, "will confirm what has been said long ago, that people never send a solemn ambassador of very high quality, except to conclude and finish altogether a secret treaty, which was previously very far advanced indeed, or to deceive. Therefore, as there has been nothing of the kind between us and Spain, let us be upon our guard against the latter object."

The designs which kept him in France, and the course which he pursued to accomplish them, are not to be discovered; but it is clear that his residence in Paris must, in the end, have become so unpleasant to him, that it is hardly possible to conceive how anything could induce him to remain, but the positive orders of his own court for some very important purpose. The negotiations for the marriage of a French

Princess to the heir apparent of the Duke of Savoy, which had slumbered during the first month or two of Don Pedro's mission, were renewed with every sign of sincerity on both parts; and the convention for a truce between Spain, the Archduke Albert, and the United Provinces, made great progress towards a speedy conclusion. The Austrian Prince and the Infanta Clara Eugenia his wife, seem to have acted with much greater moderation, sincerity, and justice, than was displayed by the Court of Spain; and in one letter of Henry the Fourth, the monarch implies that he had interfered more directly in the affairs of the Low Countries than he had previously done, at the express invitation of the Archduke. The position of Don Pedro became insignificant, if not contemptible, at the Court of France; the grandeur of his first appearance, and the warmth of his reception were forgotten; he had sunk down into a second-rate personage, where he had shone as a great star, and all the advantages of the transaction had been reaped by the King of France. To render the close of this embassy as pitiful as the commencement had been magnificent, a serviceable agent of the Spanish minister was arrested, and committed to the Châtelet. This same man, who has been previously mentioned, was probably merely one of those purveyors of small intelligence who always hang about the doors of embassies. He was an Englishman of the name of Morgan, asserted by Entragues, to have been

formerly charged with the affairs of the unfortunate Queen of Scots at the Court of France; but, if such was ever really his position, he had sunk lower and lower in fortune and respectability, till we find him receiving small gratifications of twenty and thirty florins from the Spanish ambassador, and indebted to his charity for a shirt. Whatever were his relations with Don Pedro, the rumor spread through Paris, that he had made important revelations to the King, after his arrest; and the intelligence would seem to have disquieted greatly the Spanish diplomatist. About the same time, the news from Savoy induced the Court of Spain to order him to take leave of the French monarch; and on the 12th of February, 1609, he quitted Paris with a degree of precipitation not altogether consistent with dignity.

The last hope of recovering the Low Countries, had now passed away from the ministers of Philip III. and the negotiations for a truce, which had been so long protracted by intrigue of every kind, were brought to a successful termination on the 9th of April, 1609, by the adoption of the terms and conditions proposed by France. A truce was agreed upon for twelve years; and the acknowledgment was made by Spain of the sovereignty and independence of the States of the United Provinces.

No power was now to be found in Europe at all in a condition to compete with France. Spain, exhausted and enfeebled, required long repose; the

Empire was torn by the internal dissensions of the house of Austria; and the energies of England were oppressed by the incubus monarch, who was justly designated by a French minister* as "the wisest of the idiots of Europe." All promised peace and tranquillity to France and her king; but a dangerous enemy was to be found, in Henry's own heart—that libertine spirit which he had acquired at the licentious court of Catherine de Medici, which was restrained by no ties, acknowledged no policy, and was even more rash and impetuous when his hair was white with years and adversity, than in the ardent days of youth.

Towards the close of his reign there appeared at his court, Henrietta Charlotte de Montmorency, daughter of the Constable. Her beauty and grace were remarkable, and she soon became the object of general admiration. Henry did not long remain insensible to her attractions; Bassompierre, who sought her hand, was forced to resign his pretensions; and to cover the intrigue he meditated, Henry determined to marry the object of his new passion to his young cousin the Prince de Condé. That Prince, however, had marked the growing attachment of the King, and at first refused the dangerous alliance; but on Henry's solemn assurance that he had nothing to fear, he consented, and his union with Henrietta took place. The King's proceedings soon left him no doubt of the monarch's intentions.

* Sully.

Gifts, visits, entertainments, were daily tried upon his young wife, and even the romantic gallantries of youth, so unbecoming to age, were not scorned by Henry to obtain his ends. He is said to have disguised himself frequently, to catch a glance of the fair Princess, and to have wandered at night nearly alone round the house in which she rested. After various indications of displeasure, Condé, though the breath of scandal did not yet reach his bride, resolved to remove her from the court; and Henry, irritated by passion and disappointment, assumed the tone of a tyrant, and sent Sully to insist upon the Prince bringing his wife to court, and throwing aside his needless jealousy. Menaces, not to be mistaken, were added; and Condé, having to choose between dishonor, the Bastille, or flight, determined upon the latter. He was now at Verteuil, upon the frontier of Picardy; and setting out during the night of the 29th August, 1609, with the Princess, one maid, and two gentlemen on horseback, he was soon beyond the borders of France, and safe in the Low Countries. He had nearly been captured, however, by M. de Praslin, whom Henry on the first outburst of passion sent to follow the fugitives, and arrest them even beyond the frontier; for the Archduke, fearful of embroiling himself with France, refused to give the Prince an asylum in Brussels, and Condé, leaving his wife under the protection of the Archduchess, was forced to seek a place of refuge in Germany.

As if to afford to the world an example of what the habitual indulgence of sensual appetite can effect, even upon the strongest mind and the noblest disposition, Henry now gave way to his passion with a degree of fury which approached madness. He forgot all the dictates of justice, every consideration of policy, honor, honesty, and good sense. He employed the most pitiful series of intrigues, the most disgraceful menaces, the most criminal enterprises, to persuade the Princess de Condé to return, to drive the Archduke to deliver her up, or to enable his ambassador, d'Estrées, to carry her off by force. The Princess herself perhaps was not unwilling, for the court of France was in her eyes a much more agreeable residence than that of Brussels; and her husband's moody jealousy does not seem to have won her affections. But decency required her to remain passive, and the Archduke fulfilled his promise to the Prince, and frustrated the schemes of her royal lover.

Disappointed and enraged, Henry resolved upon war, and immediate preparations were made for carrying it on with vigor. The great projects which the King had conceived for diminishing the power of the house of Austria, had induced him to take measures, which placed at his command a greater body of forces than any other monarch in Europe could bring into the field; he had secured himself by alliances with almost all the States of Christendom; Sully had restored the finances of the realm;

and the contention which was going on for the territories of Cleves and Juliers afforded a pretext, though a feeble one, for hostilities, which would doubtless have been long suspended, had not passion taken the place of policy. The Duke of Juliers and Cleves had died without male issue, leaving the representatives of the female line to claim his inheritance, and the Emperor to seize upon it as a lapsed fief. Several of the claimants had applied to Henry for support; and he now eagerly assigned their application as a motive for leading an army into the Low Countries, first haughtily demanding a passage for his troops towards the disputed territory. The historians of the monarch have attempted to show that his insane passion for the Princess de Condé had no share, or a very small one, in bringing about such a sudden change in Henry's views; and the state of preparation for war in which he found himself, has been held up as a clear proof, that his real motives were more in accordance with his greatness of mind. But if we recollect that he had steadily abstained from hostilities on many occasions of great provocation; that he had labored to effect peace between Holland and the house of Austria, without drawing the sword in favor of his allies; that his whole course since the peace of Vervins had been pacific; and that the cause of quarrel now put forward, was, a succession in which he had no share, the support of allies in whom he had little interest, the

disposition of a territory but a few miles broad, we shall see in his present determination the same outrageous passion which induced him to forget justice and honor, and show himself as a tyrant and a deceiver, for the sake of a mere girl. It is sad that the most odious scene of Henry's eventful life should be the last.*

Everything was prepared for war with incredible despatch; but before the King began his march, he resolved to settle the affairs of his kingdom, and leave the Queen to conduct the government during his absence. One of the first acts to be performed was the coronation of Mary, for which she herself pressed so eagerly, that he did not think fit to refuse; and the 13th of May was appointed for the ceremony. But Henry now displayed a change of demeanor which surprised and alarmed his friends. He became gloomy, morose, irritable. Strange presentiments of approaching death haunted his mind, and he repeatedly declared that the coronation would be the occasion of his death.†

Such feelings, perhaps, were natural, for he was conscious that for the first time he was unsheathing the sword in an unjust cause; the people were not deceived as to his motives, and their murmurs reached the palace; the preachers once more assailed the monarch from the pulpit, and represented his enterprise in the most odious colors; and Henry felt severely, that for a criminal passion he was cast-

* See Appendix, No. I. † Sully.

ing away that love which he had labored through life to gain.* Certain it is, that his mind was filled with gloomy anticipations, which neither business nor pleasure could banish, for the moment he was unoccupied, dark and bitter meditations fell upon him, from which he found it impossible to rouse himself. Intimations of coming danger, too, were frequent; a courier from France carried news of his death to Germany eight days before it happened. On the altar, at Montargis, was found a paper, announcing that in a few days he would perish by the hand of an assassin. Public prayers were offered up in some parts of the Spanish territory, for the success of a great enterprise to be carried on in France; and many warnings were given to Henry himself. The monarch, however, would pay no attention to them, notwithstanding the presentiment with which he himself was filled; and, it is said, that when, on the day of his death, his son, the Duke of Vendome,† came to tell him that La Brosse, the astrologer, had predicted

* Marshal Ornano, one of Henry's first and best supporters, a few days before being cut for the stone, which he felt he should never survive, represented warmly to the King, we are told, the discontent of the people at the severe taxation to which they were subjected.

† This fact is mentioned by L'Etoile, vol. 4, page 128; Journal de Henri Quatre; by Pierre Matthieu, and by almost every historian of the day: but, at the same time, it is right to say that, when, some years afterwards, the Duke of Vendome was asked the truth of the story, he did not recollect the fact.

that great danger menaced him that day, Henry merely laughed, saying, "La Brosse is an old fox, who wishes to have your money, and you a young fool to believe him. Our days are counted before God." Perhaps more attention might often have been paid to astrologers by great men, if they had recollected that such intimations may sometimes come from other sources than the stars, and that many of those persons looked upon it as a part of their trade, to obtain intelligence of meditated designs, in support of their pretended science.

The coronation of the Queen passed off without any accident; and her ceremonious entrance into Paris was appointed for the 16th of the month. The troops of the crown were already assembled on the frontier, fifty pieces of artillery had been sent on to wait the coming of the King, and he was to set out immediately after the approaching pageant, in order to put himself at the head of his troops; but to the surprise of all, Spain and the Low Countries remained in a state of the most perfect tranquillity; no preparations for resistance were seen, no movement was made to turn away the coming storm. This is the only circumstance which could throw the slightest suspicion on the Archduke, of taking any part in the crime about to be perpetrated. On the 14th of May the King showed himself restless and uneasy, but nevertheless he went, as usual, to hear mass at the church of the Feuillans, and returned in safety to the palace. The Queen, frightened by

the predictions of the astrologers, besought him not to go out any more that day. Henry laughed at her fears, but still showed himself gloomy and disquieted, walked in an agitated manner into the gardens of the Tuileries, talked more than once of death; and when Bassompierre represented to him the immense prosperity to which he had attained, and asked him what he could desire more, he replied, with a deep sigh, "My friend, all this must be quitted."

He twice cast himself upon his bed, to seek sleep, but in vain; and about four o'clock demanded his coach, to proceed to the arsenal, in order to confer with Sully, who was unwell. As soon as the carriage was ready, he descended to the court, and entered the vehicle, accompanied by the Dukes of Epernon and Montbazon, with Roquelaure, Lavardin, and La Force, giving some orders to Vitry, captain of the guard, before he set out. He was followed by a small troop of gentlemen, on horseback, and the carriage was surrounded by a number of running footmen.

The large coaches of that day could be entirely closed by a sort of door, or blind, which let down from the top, but the day being hot, and Henry wishing to see the preparations which were going on for the Queen's public entry, the carriage was left open on both sides, and he himself remained exposed to the gaze of the people. Passing down the Rue St. Honoré, the royal party turned into the Rue de la Feronnerie, in itself narrow, and still farther strait-

ened by a number of small shops, built against the wall of the cemetery of the Innocents, which Henry sometime before had ordered to be pulled down. At the moment the carriage entered the street, a cart, loaded with barrels of wine, was on the right side, and another, filled with hay, upon the left, so that the coachman was obliged to stop, while the footmen ran round by the cemetery to remove the obstruction.

At that moment a man, who had followed the carriage from the Louvre, put one foot upon the front wheel, the other upon a stone at the side, and reaching into the carriage, struck the King a violent blow with a knife. Henry immediately exclaimed, "I am wounded;" but notwithstanding the number of persons who were with him, the assassin was suffered to repeat the blow, which now pierced the King to the heart. A third blow was caught in the sleeve of one of the attendants; and instead of throwing down the knife, and flying, the man who had done the deed stood with the bloody weapon in his hand, and calmly allowed himself to be seized by those who ran up at the outcry which took place. The guards would have instantly put him to death; but Epernon, fortunately for his own reputation, interfered, and ordered him to be secured.

In the meantime Henry uttered not a word, and the report forthwith spread that the King was killed. His officers, however, wisely assured the people that he was only wounded, and called loudly

for some wine, while the blinds of the carriage were let down, and the vehicle turned towards the Louvre. The body was immediately removed from the coach, and laid upon a bed. Surgeons and physicians hurried to the room, and we are informed by Bassompierre, who was present, that Henry breathed one sigh after he was brought in. Life, however, was probably extinguished at once by the second blow; for he never uttered a word after he had received it, but fell upon the shoulder of the Duke of Epernon, with the blood flowing from his mouth as well as from the wound.

Thus died Henry IV. of France, in the fifty-seventh year of his age, one of the greatest, and certainly one of the most beloved Kings of France, on whom contemporaries bestowed the title of the Great, but who was known to his people, and is ever mentioned in history, by the name of Henri Quatre, a term connected in the mind of every Frenchman with the ideas of goodness, benevolence, sincerity, and courage. After having to fight for his throne against the fierce opposition of fanaticism; after having to contend with the arms and the intrigues of the Roman Catholic world; after having to struggle with the hatred of a great part of his people, excited by the wild declamations of preachers and demagogues, and with the coldness and indifference of almost all the rest, he had succeeded, not only in obtaining the crown to which he was entitled, not only in vanquishing his enemies

in the field, in subduing his rebellious subjects, in repulsing his foreign foes, and overcoming the prejudices of his people, but in gaining their devoted love, the esteem of all his allies, and the reverence even of those opposed to him.

The murderer was conducted first to the Hotel de Raix, and then placed in the conciergerie, where many persons were permitted to see him, much to the surprise of the more prudent of the Parisians. Four days after the assassination, he was brought before the assembled courts of Parliament, and his examination commenced. It was found that his name was François Ravaillac, that he was a native of Angoumois, of low birth, who had first passed through his noviciate in a monastery, but had never taken the final vows; he had then gained his living as he could, but filled with wild and superstitious notions, he had listened to all the virulent attacks upon the King, which were daily uttered by the old adherents of the League, and he had long determined to kill him on the very first occasion. To effect his purpose he had stolen a knife from the inn at which he lodged, and armed with this weapon, had followed the monarch for two days, before he found the opportunity of perpetrating the crime he meditated. He had no accomplices, he said; he had never revealed his purpose to any one, and he had been impelled by nothing but the design of delivering France from the rule of one whom he looked upon as a heretic, and who, he

believed, was about to lead his armies into Germany to overthrow the Catholic religion in that country. Such was his own statement, and nothing could induce him to vary from it in the slightest degree. He was put to the most frightful tortures, he was condemned to the most horrible death, yet he made no farther confession, accused no one, and to the last, seemed to consider the act which he had committed as justifiable and patriotic.

It is needless to report in this place all the accounts that spread through Paris, with regard to the assassination of the King, and the persons who had instigated that act. The Huguenots were sometimes charged, sometimes the Catholics; the crime was attributed to the Jesuits, to the Archduke, to the King of Spain, to Fuentes, to the Duke of Epernon; and in reference to the latter, an infamous libel was published, accusing him of having more than once endeavored to procure the death of the King. Even Henriette d'Entragues herself was not spared;* but

* For the titles of some of the papers which were circulated in Paris concerning the death of the King, see Appendix No. II. The conduct of the Duke of Epernon, especially towards the Parliament, was certainly extraordinary. It is also extraordinary that the assassin was permitted to strike three blows at the King, considering the number of persons in the carriage; and the manner in which the investigation of the facts was conducted or rather suppressed, is more extraordinary still. On the latter subject, l'Etoile remarks: "It would seem, to hear the matter spoken of, that we are afraid of shewing ourselves too exact and severe in inquiring into a crime the most wicked and barbarous,

nothing was proved against any of these persons, and the fact of a rumor having spread through the Low Countries that Henry was to be assassinated long before the act took place, and that of the Prevôt of Pluviers having declared on the very day and hour of Henry's death, that the King was dead, both of which are proved beyond all reasonable doubt, are the only grounds for supposing that the crime which deprived France of her great monarch, had been communicated to any one by the assassin.

and the most important to this state of any that has been perpetrated in Europe for a thousand years." Regarding the very suspicious circumstances attending the death of the King, and the conduct of some of the highest personages in the realm, after his death, the reader may consult "Lettres de N. Pasquier," "Lettres de Guy Patin," "Memoires de Bassompierre," &c.

APPENDIX, No. I.

HAVING expressed a very strong opinion regarding the motives which actuated Henry IV. when he took arms upon so slight a subject as the succession of Juliers and Cleves, I think it but right to add the statement of the King's motives by Sully, the best defence which has ever been attempted, but yet not satisfactory to my mind. I will not do so exactly in that minister's own words; for his marvellous vanity has induced him to add so many trifles entirely personal, that space cannot be afforded for his narration in full. No fact shall, however, be suppressed, having a real bearing upon the justification of Henry.

John William Duke of Cleves, says Sully, died in March 1609, leaving no male heirs. His territories consisted of several small principalities first united in the person of John, Count of La Marck, Duke of Cleves, who married in 1496, Mary, daughter of William Duke of Juliers and Berg. The Duchy of Gueldres was, at the same time, separated from the Duchy of Cleves, partly by sale, partly by force of law, partly by recourse to arms, and passed to the house of Austria. Each of the principalities had frequently descended to females, and the states of the several territories had always declared them to be feminine feofs. This pretension, however, had been frequently contested, especially by the Emperors of the house of Austria; and at the death of John William, the Emperor declared the Duchy of Cleves, and all the principalities united to it, reannexed to the Crown from default of male heirs. Four heirs claiming in the female line, presented themselves in Germany, and one, to whose claims very little attention was paid, the Duke of Nevers, resided at the court of Henry himself. With the four

German claimants, Henry was on terms of friendship and alliance; but as soon as the eyes of Duke William were closed, the Emperor gave the investiture of his territory to the Archduke Leopold, who immediately notified the fact to Henry the IVth, and received a reply couched, according to Sully, only in general* terms. The French monarch did not fail to express his astonishment that the opponents of the house of Austria made no preparations for the sustentation of their rights against the Archduke, and to instigate them to contest the succession. In consequence of the intimations given, the Princes in question sent an ambassador to negotiate for the support of the French King, and had every reason to be satisfied with the monarch's reply. The territories in dispute, says Sully, were far from an object of indifference to France, they were strong and rich; they were situated on the French frontier; those who disputed for them were near neighbors of France, and neighbors to be feared; at least the Emperor was so. The war about to be kindled for their possession might become an European war, and consequently France be compelled to take part therein. The interest of the Low Countries would force her to do so, for such a war would have so great an influence upon their liberty or subjection, that to secure the contested territory for the friends of France would be almost to snatch Flanders from her enemies, and to suffer them to be invaded by Austria, would be to leave the United Provinces to her as a prey.

To these objects Sully declares was joined the great design of Henry IV. for establishing a balance amongst the Powers of Europe. What better means, asked the

* It is worthy of remark, that John William died at the end of March, and that Henry took no active measures whatever in behalf of the German Princes till after the flight of the Prince de Condé and his wife, which took place in August in the same year.

minister, of inducing different Potentates to enter into that design? We might thus be led to gain all Germany to re-establish the freedom and dignity of the Germanic body, to give a death blow to the imperial authority, and to spread consternation through the house of Austria; and this result, which France might well purchase with all her treasures, would be obtained without suspicion and without jealousy. Sully then proceeds to show that the German Princes would be eager to aid France in her views; that strengthened and directed by her, they would gain that vigor and union which they totally wanted, isolated as they were, and nothing was needed but a beginning, such as the armed support of the heirs of Cleves, to enable Henry to carry out his schemes for remodelling the policy of all Europe. He then shows that an enterprising Prince would find no great difficulty in joining the duchy of Cleves to France, and making compensation to the claimants either in money or other lands; and he goes on to declare, that the King had already engaged his word to undertake the defence of those Princes, had neglected nothing to attach them to himself, had always offered them assistance, and even caused his troops to advance to the frontier. He declares that the enterprise would be easy, that neither Spain nor Austria had the means of offering effectual opposition, and that the expulsion of the Austrians from Cleves would be merely an introduction to a more important and brilliant undertaking.

Although this statement of Henry's views is not given directly by Sully with reference to the charge of the King having entered upon a fierce and destructive war from motives of personal passion, yet Sully's account has been used to defend the monarch from the imputation of having been moved by love for the Princess de Condé, to abandon the pacific course which he had pursued since the

peace of Vervins. It seems to me, however, that unless it could be shown (which Sully no where does show), that Henry had determined upon war before the flight of the Prince de Condé, the menaces which he used to the Archduke, and the statements made by many of the best informed contemporaries, may be assumed as proofs that, although contemplating hostilities at a future period, the French sovereign would not have taken arms at that time, had he not been provoked by the protection offered to the Princess de Condé. Every act had tended towards peace up to the period of the Princess's flight: he had neglected several honorable pretexts for war; he had only six months before bound the hands of the United Provinces, his surest allies, by a treaty signed after the death of the Duke of Cleves was known in Paris; and no sufficient motives are apparent for an entire change of policy. Bassompierre shows; by his description of the scene which took place at the palace, on the news of Condé's evasion being carried thither, the state of the King's mind, and proves that he determined to threaten war if the Archduke did not expel the fugitives from his territories: the Archduke steadily refused to do so, and a very contemptible pretext for hostilities was immediately seized upon.

APPENDIX, No. II.

Letters, Papers, etc. referring to the Death of Henry IV.

I. Extrait d'un Manuscrit trouvé après la mort de Monsieur le Duc d'Aumalle en son cabinet; icelui étant signé de sa main pour approbation d'icelui et cachetté de ses armes.

II. Factum de Pierre du Jardin Sieur et Capitaine de Lagarde.

III. Manifeste de Pierre du Jardin Sieur et Capitaine de Lagarde, prisonnier en la Conciergerie du Palais à Paris.

IV. Interrogation et declaration de Mademoiselle de Coman.

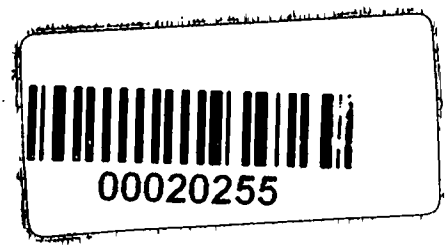
V. Rencontre de Monsieur le Duc d'Espernon et de François Ravaillac, executé à mort dans la Ville de Paris en l'année 1610.

IV. Arrest du 12 oust mil six cens seize.

VII. La Chemise sanglante d'Henry le Grand en l'année 1615.

THE END.

G. NORMAN, PRINTER, MAIDEN LANE, COVENT GARDEN.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